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Buddha and the Occident

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(Editorial Note: At his death in 1933 Irving Babbitt was working on an edition of the Buddhist document the Dhammapada. He never finished the notes that were to accompany it, but his translation and introductory essay were found completed and will shortly be published by the Oxford University Press. Mrs. Babbitt has permitted us to print the essay, which was written in 1927. Certain passages were used by Professor Babbitt in his essay "Romanticism and the Orient" which was published in this magazine's predecessor The Bookman *and later in* On Being Creative; *they here find their proper place in Professor Babbitt's last work.)*

The special danger of the present time would seem to be an increasing material contact between national and racial groups that remain spiritually alien. The chief obstacle to a better understanding between East and West in particular is a certain type of Occidental who is wont to assume almost unconsciously that the East has everything to learn from the West and little or nothing to give in return. One may distinguish three main forms of this assumption of superiority on the part of the Occidental: first, the assumption of racial superiority, an almost mystical faith in the pre-eminent virtues of the white peoples (especially Nordic blonds) as compared with the brown or yellow races; secondly, the assumption of superiority based on the achievements of physical science and the type of "progress" it has promoted, a tendency to regard as a general inferiority the inferiority of the Oriental in material efficiency; thirdly, the assumption of religious superiority, less marked now than formerly, the tendency to dismiss non-Christian Asiatics *en masse* as "heathen", or else to recognize value in their religious beliefs, notably in Buddhism, only in so far as they conform to the pattern set by Christianity. Asiatics for their part are ready enough to turn to account the discoveries of Western science, but they are even less disposed than they were before the Great War to admit the moral superiority of the West. A certain revulsion of feeling seems to be taking place even in Japan which has gone farther than any other Oriental land in its borrowings from the Occident.

On any comprehensive survey, indeed, Asiatics, so far from having a mean estimate of themselves, have had their own conceit of superiority, not only with reference to Occidentals but with reference to one another. Many Hindus have held in the past, some no doubt still hold, that true spirituality has never appeared in the world save on the sacred soil of India. No country, again, not even ancient Greece, has been more firmly convinced than China that it alone was civilized. A statesman of the Tang period addressed to the throne a memorial against Buddhism which begins as follows: "This Buddha was a barbarian." One of the traditional names of China, "All-under-Heaven" (*Poo-Tien-shia*), is itself sufficiently eloquent.

In general Asia offers cultural groups so widely divergent that one may ask if there is not something artificial in any attempt to contrast an Asiatic with a European or Western point of view. A symposium* on this topic was recently held in Paris to which about one hundred and fifty French and foreign writers and scholars contributed. According to one of these contributors, M. Sylvain Lévi of the *Collège de France*, it is absurd to bring together under one label "a Syrian of Beyrut, an Iranian of Persia, a Brahman of Benares, a pariah of the Deccan, a merchant of Canton, a mandarin of Peking, a lama of Thibet, a yacut of Siberia, a daimio of Japan, a cannibal of Sumatra, etc." When stated in such general terms the question of East versus West has, as a matter of fact, little or no meaning. It may, however, turn out to have a very weighty meaning if properly defined and limited. Other contributors to the Paris symposium, though they express a singular variety of opinions about Asia, occasionally show some inkling of what this meaning is. They are helped to their sense of the contrast between Europe and Asia by another continental contrast – that between Europe and America; and here they are in substantial agreement. America stands for the purely industrial and utilitarian view of life, the cult of power and machinery and material comfort. It is in order to escape from this baleful excess of Americanism that Europe is inclined to turn towards the East. "Europe," we read in the symposium, "is, as a result of her almost mortal sufferings of recent years, ready to bow her head and humble herself. It will then be possible for Oriental influences to make themselves felt. An immense continent will remain the refuge and the fortress of the Occidental spirit: the whole of America will harden herself and proudly close her mind, whereas Europe will heed the lesson of the Orient." One may perhaps sum up the sense of passages of this kind by saying that in its pursuit of the truths of the natural order Europe had come to neglect the truths of humility – the truths of the inner life. In the literal sense of the word, it has lost its orientation, for it originally received these truths from the Orient. One remembers Arnold's account of this former contact between East and West: first, the impact of a Europe drunk with power upon Asia.

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* *Les Appels de l'Orient:* Les Cahiers du Mois. Emile-Paul, Frères, Éditeurs. Paris.

The East bowed low before the blast
In patient deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

And finally the heeding of the voice of the East, in other words the acceptance of the truths of the inner life in their Christian form, by a Europe that had grown weary of her own materialism:

She heard it, the victorious West,
In sword and crown arrayed,
She felt the void that mined her breast,
She shivered and obeyed.

The problems that arise today in connection with the relations of East and West are far more complex than they were in Graeco-Roman times. The East now means not merely the Near East, but even more the Far East. Moreover, the East, both Near and Far, is showing itself less inclined than formerly to bow before the imperialistic aggression of the Occident "in patient deep disdain". On the contrary, a type of nationalistic self-assertion is beginning to appear in various Oriental lands that is only too familiar to us in the West. Japan in particular has been disposing of her Buddhas as curios and turning her attention to battleships. The lust of domination, which is almost the ultimate fact of human nature, has been so armed in the Occident with the machinery of scientific efficiency that the Orient seems to have no alternative save to become efficient in the same way or be reduced to economic and political vassalage. This alternative has been pressing with special acuteness on China, the pivotal country of the Far East. Under the impact of the West an ethos that has endured for thousands of years has been crumbling amid a growing spiritual bewilderment. In short the Orient itself is losing its orientation. The essence of this orientation may be taken to be the affirmation in some form or other of the truths of the inner life. Unfortunately affirmations of this kind have come to seem in the Occident a mere matter of dogma and tradition in contrast with a point of view that is positive and experimental.

It is here that the study of great Eastern teachers, notably Confucius and Buddha, may prove helpful. The comparative absence of dogma in the humanism of Confucius and the religion of Buddha can scarcely be regarded as an inferiority. On the contrary one can at least see the point of view of a young Chinese scholar, Mr. H. H. Chang, who complains that the man of the Occident has introduced unnecessary theological and metaphysical complications into religion: he has been too prone to indulge in "weird dogmas" and "uncanny curiosity". He has been guilty to a degree unknown in the Far East of intolerance, obscurantism, and casuistry. Pascal, one of the most profound of religious thinkers, attacked casuistry in its Jesuitical form but himself supplies an example of what Mr. Chang means by weird dogmas. Man, says Pascal in substance, is unintelligible to himself without the belief in infant damnation.

The Far Eastern doctrine that is probably freest from the undesirable elements that Mr. Chang enumerates is the authentic teaching of Buddha. Scholarly investigation has already proceeded to a point where it is possible to speak with some confidence not only of this teaching but of Buddha himself.* One may affirm indeed that few doctrines and personalities of the remote past stand out more clearly. There is practical agreement among scholars that the material found in the Pāli Canon, the basis of the form of the religion known as the Hīnayāna or Small Vehicle, which prevails in Ceylon, Burma, and other countries, is on the whole more trustworthy than the records of the Mahāyāna or Great Vehicle, which, variously modified, prevails in Thibet, China, Korea, and Japan.

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* Numerous and intricate historical problems arise, however, in connection with the Pāli Canon and the degree to which it may lay claim to authenticity.

The psychological evidence on this point, which is overwhelming, is supplemented by historical evidence – for example, the Asokan inscriptions. By psychological evidence I mean evidence of the same kind as is supplied by numerous passages of the New Testament, passages that give one the immediate sense of being in the presence of a great religious teacher. Anyone who can read the Sermon on the Mount and then proceed to speculate on the "historicity" of Jesus must simply be dismissed as incompetent in matters religious.

On the basis then of evidence both psychological and historical one must conclude that if the Far East has been comparatively free from casuistry, obscurantism, and intolerance, the credit is due in no small measure to Buddha. It is so difficult to have a deep conviction and at the same time to be tolerant that many have deemed the feat impossible. Yet not only Buddha himself but many of his followers achieved it. For example, the tolerant spirit displayed by the Emperor Asoka who probably did more than any other person to make Buddhism a world religion, simply reflects the spirit of the Founder. An apologue of Buddha's which has been widely popular in both East and West, is relevant to this topic of tolerance. Once upon a time, Buddha relates, a certain king of Benares, being bored and desiring to divert himself, gathered together a number of beggars blind from birth, and offered a prize to the beggar who should give him the best account of an elephant. The first beggar who examined the elephant chanced to lay hold upon the leg, and reported that an elephant was like a tree-trunk; a second, laying hold of the tail, declared that an elephant was like a rope; a third, who seized an ear, insisted that an elephant was like a palm leaf; and so on. Whereupon the beggars proceeded to dispute with one another and finally fell to fisticuffs and the king was highly diverted. Even so, says Buddha, ordinary teachers, who have grasped this or that small member of the truth, quarrel with one another. Only a Buddha can apprehend the whole. The thought that in matters spiritual we are at best blind beggars fighting with one another in our native murk is not conducive to a narrow and fanatical intensity. The rounded vision is so difficult, so alien, one is tempted to say, to human nature, that one is not surprised to learn that Buddhas are rare, only five at the most in a kalpa or cosmic cycle, a period, according to Hindu computation, of something over four billion years.

The apologue I have just cited suggests that Buddha was more prone to humor than most religious teachers. The contrast in this respect between certain portions of the Pāli Canon (notably the Jātaka tales) and the Christian Bible is striking. Another trait possessed by Buddha that is in itself humanistic rather than religious is urbanity. The doctrine of the mean that Buddha proclaimed even in the religious life is not unrelated to the absence in Buddhism of the casuistical and obscurantist element. There is a sense, one should remember, in which casuistry is legitimate and indeed inevitable. The general principle needs to be adjusted to the infinitely varying circumstances of actual life. There is casuistry in this sense in the first main division of the Pāli Canon (*Vinaya*) – the division which deals with the details of discipline in the Order (*Sangha*) founded by Buddha. The danger here is that a minute outer regulation should encroach unduly on the moral autonomy of the individual. Buddha, as we shall presently see more fully, was at special pains to assert this autonomy. A second peril of casuistry is that it should not only substitute outer authority for individual conscience, but that it should be made a cover for the kind of relaxation that Pascal attacks in the *Provincial Letters*. Buddha would have the members of his Order avoid this relaxation without falling into the opposite extreme of asceticism and mortification of the flesh. This is in substance his doctrine of the middle path.

The obscurantism that denies unduly the senses has usually been associated in the Occident with the obscurantism that denies unduly the intellect. Buddha's avoidance of this latter form of obscurantism is a matter of even more interest than his avoidance of the ascetic extreme. The conflict between the head and the heart, the tendency to repudiate the intellect either in the name of what is above or what is below it, which has played such an enormous rôle in the Occident from some of the early Christians to Bergson, is alien to genuine Buddhism. The supreme illumination of Buddha was associated with the precise tracing of cause and effect, with the following out of the so-called causal nexus. His discriminating temper appears in the care with which he uses general terms, always a crucial point in any doctrine. He gives one the impression of a person who has worked out his ideas to the ultimate degree of clarity, a clarity that is found not merely in separate propositions but in the way in which they are woven into an orderly whole. During his youth, we are told, he passed through a period of groping and hesitation, but after his illumination he never seems to grope or hesitate. This firm intellectual grasp, joined to a dominant and unwavering purpose, no doubt contributed to the effect of authority that he produced upon his contemporaries and continues to produce upon us. In his personality he strikes the reader of the old records as massive, some might say even a bit ponderous, and at the same time supremely self-reliant and aggressively masculine. One has the sense of getting very close to Buddha himself in the verses of the Sutta-Nipāta descriptive of the true sage. A few lines of this passage, which I render literally, are as follows:

The wise man who fares strenuously apart,
Who is unshaken in the midst of praise or blame,
Even as a lion that trembles not at noises,
Or as the wind that is not caught in a net,
Or as the lotus that is unstained by the water —
A leader of others and not by others led,
Him verily the discerning proclaim to be a sage.

In human nature, as it is acutally constituted, every virtue has its cognate fault. The unflinching analysis practised by the early Buddhists runs very easily, especially when divorced from intuition, in some sense or other of that much abused word, into scholastic dryness. There are portions of the Buddhist writings that remind one in this respect of the less attractive side of the Aristotelian tradition in the West. The Buddhist again inclines at times, like the Aristotelian, to be unduly categorical and so to achieve a sort of false finality. The Buddhist commentators, for example, give what they conceive to be a definitive enumeration of the different noises that characterize a normal town! Furthermore, large portions of the Buddhist books seem to the Western reader to have damnable iteration, to push beyond permissible grounds the sound maxim that repetition is the mother of memory. It is well to remember that most of this repetition is only a mnemonic device that would never have been employed if the canonical material had from the outset been committed to writing. And then, too, in the midst of tracts of wearisome repetition and arid categorizing one encounters not infrequently passages that are vividly metaphorical and concrete and lead one to infer in Buddha a rare gift for aphoristic utterance; though even these passages, if one may be allowed to speak of such matters from a profane literary point of view, can scarcely match in sheer epigrammatic effectiveness certain sayings of Christ.

If the doctrine and personality of Buddha stand out so distinctly from the ancient records, how, it may be asked, has there been so much misapprehension regarding both? Certain reasons for this misapprehension are obvious; it may be well to clear these away before coming to other reasons which lie less near the surface. In the first place, much confusion has been caused in the Occident by the failure to distinguish between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. Various eminent thinkers and writers of the nineteenth century got their chief impression of Buddhism from the extravagant theosophy of the *Lotus of the Good Law* as translated by Eugène Burnouf. Even those who, without knowing Pāli, have gone to the more authentic documents have been frequently misled by the translations. The special pitfall here is the general terms. Though these terms, as I have said, are used by Buddha himself with considerable precision, they have no exact Occidental equivalents. Translators seem at times to have given up in despair the task of rendering all the discriminations of a subtle and unfamiliar psychology. Thus it is estimated that Fausböll, to whom we are deeply indebted for the first edition of the Dhammapada in the West, has in his version of the Sutta-Nipāta translated fifteen different Pāli words by the one English word "desire".

Moreover, to come to less obvious sources of misapprehension, serious study of the Far East got under way during a period that was in its predominant temper either romantic or, again, scientific and rationalistic. Neither the romanticist nor the pure rationalist is qualified to grasp what is specifically Oriental in the Orient. The romanticist seeks in the East what he seeks everywhere, the element of strangeness and wonder. His interest is in differences rather than in identities; as a consequence, this form of Orientalism has amounted chiefly in practice to the pursuit of picturesqueness and local color. Closely allied to this pursuit is the quest of some place of refuge from an unpalatable here and now. A familiar example is "The Road to Mandalay", which tells of the satisfaction that the British private finds in Buddhist Burma of his craving for a "neater sweeter maiden in a cleaner greener land". I may be accused of taking too seriously Kipling's trifle, but after all this romantic imperialist has enjoyed a certain prestige as an interpreter, not only of the Anglo-Indian East, but of the real East. The central passage of "The Road to Mandalay" may therefore serve as well as any other to illustrate the Oriental aspect of the immense literature of escape that has grown up in connection with the romantic movement.

Ship me somewheres East of Suez, where the best is like
the worst,
Where there ain't no Ten Commandments, an' a man
may raise a thirst;
For the temple bells are callin' an' it's there that I would
be,—
By the old Moulmain Pagoda lookin' lazy at the sea.

If the temple bells are calling the British private to "raise a thirst", to what, one may inquire, are they calling the native Burman? Certainly not to be "lazy" and irresponsible. Kipling himself would no doubt warn us against pursuing any such unprofitable inquiry, in virtue of the principle that "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". The fact is that they are meeting more and more, with the attendant danger that this meeting will be only on the material level. Kipling's line is rightfully resented by Orientals: it is true about in the sense that John is John and James is James and never the twain shall meet, or, if there is any difference between the two statements, it is one of degree and not of kind.

If we refuse then to admit that the point of view of Buddhist Burma is necessarily unintelligible to us and turn for information to an authentic document like the Dhammapada, what we find is that a central admonition of Buddha may be summed up in the phrase: Do not raise a thirst! Nothing perhaps throws more light on what actually goes on in Burma today than the type of education given to the children of the country by the members of the Buddhist Order. This education consists largely in the memorizing of certain sacred texts. One of the passages especially favored for this purpose, we learn from a recent book on Burma, is Buddha's discussion of the nature of true blessedness, which runs in part as follows:

> To wait on mother and father, to cherish child and wife and follow a quiet calling, this is true blessedness.
>
> To give alms, to live religiously, to protect relatives, to perform blameless deeds, this is true blessedness.
>
> To cease from sin, to refrain from intoxicating drinks, to persevere in right conduct, this is true blessedness.
>
> Reverence and humility, contentment and gratitude, the hearing of the Law of righteousness at fitting moments, this is true blessedness.
>
> Patience and pleasant speech, intercourse with holy men, religious conversation at due seasons, this is true blessedness.
>
> Penance and chastity, discernment of the noble truths and the realization of peace, this is true blessedness.

The author of the book on Burma proffers the further information that, as a result of memorizing such verses, the children acquire "boundless charity and rigid self-control" — a statement one is inclined to receive with some skepticism. Like Kipling, though in an entirely different way, he is probably substituting an idyllic for the real Burma. But if only a fraction of what he says is true, we should seek to divert the attention of our own children from radio sets and motion-pictures and set them to memorizing Buddhist verses!

Though particular utterances of Buddha, like the discourse on True Blessedness I have just quoted, may offer little difficulty, it must be admitted that his teaching is not easy for the Westerner to grasp in its total spirit. Even the person who affirms an underlying unity in human nature and is more interested in this unity than in its picturesque modifications in time and space, should at least be able to see the point of view of the scholar who affirmed that he had turned to the study of Buddhism in order that he might enjoy "the strangeness of the intellectual landscape". A chief reason for this strangeness is that the doctrine of Buddha cuts across certain oppositions that have been established in Western thought since the Greeks, and have come to seem almost inevitable. There has, for example, from the time of Heraclitus and Parmenides been an opposition between the partisans of the One and the partisans of the Many, between those who see in life only change and relativity and those who in some form or other affirm an abiding unity. The Platonic affirmation in particular of a world of ideas that transcends the flux so combined with Christianity that it has come to be almost inseparable from our notion of religion.

Religion, as we understand it, seems to require faith in a spiritual essence or soul that is sharply set apart from the transitory, and in a God who is conceived as the supreme "idea" or entity. Buddha denies the soul in the Platonic sense and does not grant any place in his discipline to the idea of God. Superficially he seems to be on the side of all the "flowing" philosophers from Heraclitus to Bergson. The schoolmen of the Middle Ages would have accounted him an uncompromising nominalist. We are told that, at the voice of a Buddha proclaiming the law of mutability in both Heaven and earth, the bright gods who had deemed themselves immortal felt a shiver of apprehension like that occasioned by the roar of the lion in the other beasts of the field. Buddha is so disconcerting to us because doctrinally he recalls the most extreme of our Occidental philosophers of the flux, and at the same time, by the type of life at which he aims, reminds us rather of the Platonist and the Christian.

Buddha also differs from the religious teachers with whom we are familiar by his positive temper. The idea of experiment and the idea of the supernatural have come to seem to us mutually exclusive. Yet Buddha may perhaps be best defined as a critical and experimental supernaturalist. If he deserves to be thus defined it is not because of the so-called magic powers (*iddhi*) — the power of supernormal memory, of levitation and the like. If we accepted only a small part of what we read in the ancient records about the thaumaturgical accomplishments not merely of Buddha but of a number of his followers, we should have to conclude that man has certain psychic capacities that have become atrophied through long disuse. In general, however, the ancient Buddhist maintained an extreme reserve in regard to the magic powers. He granted them at most a very subordinate rôle in religion. He is far removed in this respect from a Pascal who avowed, like St. Augustine before him, that he would not have accepted Christianity had it not been for its miracles.

One is justified in asserting on other than thaumaturgical grounds that the genuine teaching of Buddha is steeped in the supernatural. According to the tradition, when Buddha begged his way through the streets of his native town, his father, King Suddhodana, demurred; whereupon Buddha said that he was merely following the practice of all his race. When the King protested that no one of his race had ever been a mendicant, Buddha replied that he referred, not to his earthly lineage, but to the race of the Buddhas. As a matter of fact, what is specifically supernatural, not merely in the Buddhas but in other religious teachers, for example in St. Francis, is their achievement of certain virtues. Of these the virtue that marks most immediately the obeisance of the spirit to what transcends nature and has therefore always been held, by those who believe in such virtues at all, to command the others, is humility. In the present naturalistic era the very word humility has tended to fall into disuse or, if used at all, to be used incorrectly. One needs to be reminded, for example, that humility and modesty are not at all synonymous. Matthew Arnold says that Emerson was one of the most modest of men, Mr. Brownell that he was one of the least humble. Both statements are conceivably correct.

Of Buddha, one is tempted to say that he was humble without being modest. It is not easy to ascribe modesty to a teacher who made claims for himself even more sweeping than those put forth by the Founder of Christianity. Regarding these claims one is reminded of an anecdote that may also serve to illustrate the peculiar vein of humor in the Buddhist writings. A certain Buddhist recluse, we are told, being puzzled by a knotty point of doctrine and finding no mortal who could solve his difficulty, at last by appropriate meditations mounted from heaven to heaven but was still unable to discover anyone who could enlighten him. Finally he came to the paradise of Brahma, and propounded the question to the divinity himself. Brahma said, "I am Brahma, the Supreme Being, the Omniscient, the Unsurpassed", etc. "I did not ask you," replied the recluse, "whether you were Brahma, the Supreme Being, the Omniscient and Unsurpassed, but whether you could answer my question."* Whereupon Brahma took him to one side and explained that the angels of his retinue thought him omniscient, but that in fact no one could give the desired enlightenment save Buddha.

That Buddha should put himself above all other animate beings, whether men or gods, and at the same time be humble is, from the Christian point of view, highly paradoxical. The essence of humility in Christianity is the submission not merely of man's will but of the will of Christ himself to the will of a divine personality. If one is to understand how Buddha avoids asserting any such personality and at the same time retains humility one needs to reflect on what it means to be a critical and experimental supernaturalist. It means first of all that one must deny oneself the luxury of certain affirmations about ultimate things and start from the immediate data of consciousness. It is hard to see, for example, how one can affirm, on strictly experimental grounds, a personal God and personal immortality. If a man feels that these tremendous affirmations are necessary for his spiritual comfort, he should turn to dogmatic and revealed religion which alone can give them, adding with Dr. Johnson that "the good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit". The person who assumes a genuinely critical attitude is finally forced to accept in some form or other the maxim that man is the measure of all things. If one is told in the words of Plato that not man but God is the measure of all things, the obvious reply is that man nowhere perhaps gives his own measure so clearly as in his conceptions of God; and that is why, as Goethe would add, God is so often made a jest. What one is able to affirm without going beyond immediate experience and falling into dogma is, in Arnold's phrase, a great power not ourselves that makes for righteousness, a phrase that reminds one of Buddha's conception of the *dhamma*, or human law, as one may render it, in contradiction to the law of physical nature. Not being able to find any personality human or divine superior to his own, Buddha got his humility, as he himself tells us, by looking up to the Law.

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* Kevaddha-Sutta of the Dīgha-Nikāya.

Let us consider more carefully what this obeisance to the *dhamma* means when disengaged, as Buddha seeks to disengage it, from dogma and metaphysical assumption and envisaged as one of the immediate data of consciousness. Numerous Western philosophers from Descartes down have professed to start from these data. On comparing the results they have reached with the results reached by Buddha one is conscious of some central clash. At the risk of being unduly schematic, one may say that the tendency of Western philosophers has been to regard as primary in consciousness either thought (*cogito ergo sum*) or feeling (*sentio ergo sum*). Buddha, for his part, is neither a rationalist nor, again, an emotionalist. No small confusion has resulted from trying to fit him into one or the other of these alien categories. He gives the primary place to will, but to a quality of will that has been almost inextricably bound up in the Occident with the doctrine of divine grace and has been obscured in direct proportion to the decline of this doctrine. The question of the priority of will in this sense, as compared either with intellect or emotion, and the question of humility that is bound up with it, is one, as I have tried to show elsewhere, that involves an opposition not merely between Buddha and this or that Occidental philosopher, but between the Asiatic outlook on life in general and that which has tended to prevail in Europe. The granting of the primacy to intellect or mind, in any sense those terms have had since Anaxagoras, would seem to be incompatible with humility. It is a task of absorbing interest to trace the struggle between Christian voluntarism with its subordination of man in his natural self – including the intellect – to God's will, and a resurgent rationalism. In tracing a subject of this kind one becomes aware of a main problem in the spiritual life of the Occident to which I have already referred; reason has repeatedly aspired to rise out of its due place and then the resulting reactions against its presumption have encouraged various forms of obscurantism.

Among the doctrines in which reason has thus aspired unduly, with a corresponding tendency of pride to prevail over humility, Stoicism stands pre-eminent: first, because many important modern philosophies – for example, those of Descartes, Spinoza, and Kant – have in their practical bearing on life and conduct much in common with Stoicism; secondly, because misleading comparisons have been made between the Buddhist and the Stoic. The Buddhist reminds one of the Stoic by the severity of the self-control he inculcates, also by his self-reliant spirit. He relies, however, in this discipline, not, like the Stoic, upon a "reason" supposed to coincide with the cosmic order, but upon a will that transcends it. Reliance upon this will gives the psychic equivalent of the Christian submission to the divine will, in other words, of humility. The Stoic is a monist; the Buddhist is, like the Christian, an uncompromising dualist. So far from "accepting the universe" in the Stoic sense, he rejects so much of it that the alarmed Occidental is inclined to ask whether anything remains.

Practically the difference between monist and dualist converges upon the problem of evil. The Stoic is a theoretic optimist; Buddha, though very untheoretic here as elsewhere, is extraordinarily insistent upon the fact of evil. "This alone I have taught," he says, "sorrow and the release from sorrow." Buddha's emphasis on sorrow may seem to some incompatible with the urbanity I have attributed to him; for nothing is more contrary to the urbane temper than absorption in a single idea. He really aims at wholeness, a type of wholeness that it is hard for us to grasp because breadth is for us something to be achieved expansively and even by an encyclopaedic aggregation of parts; whereas the wholeness at which Buddha aims is related in fact, as it is etymologically, to holiness and is the result of a concentration of the will. To define the quality of will that Buddha would have us put forth psychologically – that is, by his own method – is to go very far indeed in an understanding of his doctrine.

The modern man is normally, as the Germans phrase it, a "yes-sayer" and a "becomer" and glories in the fact. Buddha on the other hand is probably the chief of all the "no-sayers"; specifically he says no to everything that is implicated in the element of change even to the point of defining the highest good as "escape from the flux". "What is not eternal," he says, "does not deserve to be looked on with satisfaction." In his rejection of the transitory for the eternal he is, as I have just remarked, neither metaphysical nor theological, but psychological. One needs only to take a glance at the four noble truths of Buddha to perceive that his doctrine is in its genuine spirit a psychology of desire. The four noble truths themselves need to be interpreted in the light of the three "characteristics", which, we are told, only a Buddha can properly proclaim: namely, (1) the impermanence of all finite things; in this sense (2) their lack of "soul" or their "unreality"; and therefore (3) their final unsatisfactoriness. As one becomes aware of the fact of impermanence and of its implications, one tends to substitute for the ignoble craving for what is subject to corruption the noble craving for the "incomparable security of a Nirvāna free from corruption".

Buddha's attitude towards the "soul", it should be observed, differs decisively from that of the Vedantists in India and from the somewhat similar doctrine of Plato in the West. His objection to those who assert a soul and other similar entities is not metaphysical but practical: they are thereby led to think they have transcended the transitory when they have not done so and are thus lulled into a false security. Buddha can scarcely be regarded as an idealist in any sense the term has ever had in the Occident. He is not an idealist in the Platonic sense, in spite of numerous and important points of contact between his teaching and that of Plato, because of the central clash I have just indicated. Still less is he an idealist in the other two main senses of the word: he does not hope, like Rousseau and the sentimentalists, to unify life in terms of feeling; nor again, after the fashion of philosophers like Hegel, to unify it in terms of intellect. The unification that Buddha seeks is to be achieved by the exercise of a certain quality of will that says no to the outgoing desires with a view to the substitution of the more permanent for the less permanent among these desires and finally to the escape from impermanence altogether. His assertion of this quality of will is positive and empirical to the last degree.

I have already tried to make clear that Buddha is not merely a great religious personality but a thinker so trenchant as to invite comparison with the chief figures in Occidental thought. An interesting comparison suggests itself at this point with the thinker who has had a preponderant influence on recent Occidental philosophy – Immanuel Kant. Anyone who glances through the three critiques of Kant will be struck by the phrase *a priori* which recurs innumerable times and gives the key to the whole body of doctrine. To Kant it seemed that a resort to some kind of *apriorism* was necessary if one was to bind together and unify the elements of experience that the empirical method of Hume seemed to dissolve into a flux of unrelated impressions. Buddha would have opposed Hume not on *apriorist* but empirical grounds. He would have asserted a quality of will peculiar to man not as a theory but as a fact, as one of the immediate data of consciousness. Buddha may be defined indeed, in contradistinction to a naturalistic empiricist like Hume, as a religious empiricist. One may perhaps best illustrate what it means to assert positively and critically a religious will in man by a study of Buddha's way of dealing with the three questions that must, according to Kant, confront every philosopher: What can I know? What must I do? What may I hope?

In virtue of its intellectualist temper Western philosophy has always shown a strong predilection for the first of these questions, the so-called problem of knowledge. The drift of the modern philosophy of the West towards epistemological inquiry has been marked since Descartes. From the time of Locke one is tempted to define this philosophy as a long debauch of epistemology. The various subsidiary questions that have been discussed – the question of substance, of innate ideas, of causation, of time and space, both in themselves and in their relation to one another – all finally converge upon the question as to the relation of appearance to reality. This endless epistemological debate would be justified if it could be shown to have prepared the way for a more adequate reply to Kant's second question: What must I do? The Christian supernaturalist would not, however, grant that it has. The false dualism set up by Descartes has been eliminated, he would admit, but he would add that the true dualism has been eliminated along with it – the opposition, namely, between God's will and man's. The Buddhist sets up a similar opposition between a higher and a lower will, not, however, on dogmatic but on psychological grounds. Western thinkers from St. Augustine to William James who have sought to deal with the will psychologically are in agreement with one another and with Buddha in at least one particular: will is revealed above all in the act of attention or concentration. The office of a Buddha is to proclaim the truths to which man must attend if he would escape from sorrow. The "causal nexus" or "chain of dependent origination" that leads to the rise of sorrow is extraordinarily difficult to grasp. To the Occidental indeed it is likely to seem a hopeless puzzle. The essential link in the chain is at all events "ignorance". Strictly speaking, one does not in the Buddhist sense overcome ignorance merely by acquiescing in the four noble truths. Anyone who does not get beyond this stage is compared to a cowherd counting another's kine. A man may possess the noble truths and so escape from sorrow only by acting upon them. Knowledge follows upon will. The term faith has had various meanings in Buddhism as in Christianity. The original meaning is faith to act. In so far, the Buddhist is in agreement with the Christian voluntarist when he proclaims that we do not know in order that we may believe, but we believe in order that we may know.

In its primary emphasis on will, the doctrine of Buddha is not a system in the Occidental sense but a "path". A Buddha is simply one who has trodden this path and can report to others what he has found. In this sense he is the Tathāgata. He who would tread the same path must not be diverted from concentration on the goal by anything to the right or to the left. Everything is to be set aside which does not, in Buddha's own phrase, make for "quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom, and Nirvāna". Anyone who entered the Buddhist order in the hope of finding a solution for his merely speculative difficulties was doomed to disappointment.

We are told that one of the brethren once came to Buddha with a list of such difficulties – for example, whether the world is finite or infinite, eternal or not eternal, whether soul and body are one or separate, whether the saint exists or does not exist after death, etc. – and complained to him that he had received no enlightenment on these points. Buddha replied to him in substance that human nature is sick of a disease. His own rôle he conceived to be that of the physician. Anyone who refused to act on his teaching until he had an answer to such questions Buddha compared to a man who had been wounded by a poisoned arrow and was unwilling to receive medical aid until he had learned whether the man who had wounded him was of light or dark complexion, belonged to the Brahman or warrior caste, etc. No one was ever more unfriendly than Buddha to persons who had "views". One must indeed agree with a German student of Buddhism that the dislike of mere speculation is the distinguishing mark of the authentic doctrine. One may, however, refuse to agree with him that this practical and unmetaphysical temper is a weakness. Some questions Buddha would dismiss because they are intrinsically unthinkable; others because they are not worthy of thought – do not, in his own phrase, make for edification. Among the questions that he thus dismisses are several that have been persistently debated in Occidental religion and philosophy.

In defining the topics with which the man who has renounced the world may properly concern himself Buddha makes a distinction similar to that of Christ between the things of God and the things of Cæsar. So far from encouraging the members of his order to take a part in political life, he would not even have them discuss politics.

Though a Buddha may proclaim to those seeking to enter the path the truths on which they may profitably concentrate and at the same time set them a persuasive example, he is not to be regarded in the full Christian sense as a Saviour. In the last analysis a man must, according to Buddha, save himself. Though both Christian and Buddhist associate salvation with the putting forth of a similar quality of will, no small difference between the two results from the fact that the Christian associates this quality of will in a greater or lesser degree with divine grace. He would even tend to regard as blasphemous Buddha's dictum: "Self is the lord of self. Who else can be the lord?" To be sure, Christians themselves have varied widely in their views of grace. Some would receive the grace immediately, others mediately through the Church. The Jansenist, for example, with his emphasis on the inner light seems spiritually autonomous, at least so far as outer authority is concerned, compared with the Jesuit. But even the inner light of the Jansenist, implying as it does complete dependence on the divine will, is something far removed from the spiritual autonomy of the Buddhist, an autonomy so complete that in describing it one is constrained to employ at the risk of grave misunderstanding the terms self-reliance and individualism; for in the West the doctrine of self-reliance, from the ancient Cynics and Stoics down to Emerson, has been associated with pride rather than humility.

The Buddhist type of individualism again is at the opposite pole from the type with which we are familiar nowadays – the type which combines a gospel of self-expression with the evasion of moral responsibility. Buddha seems to the Occidental to allow insufficiently for self-expression, at the same time that he gives the widest possible extension to the doctrine that a man is simply reaping, in the good or evil that befalls him, the fruits of his own sowing. These fruits seem even more inevitable than in Christianity, inasmuch as man is accountable to Law and not to a more or less arbitrary and capricious divine will. He cannot ascribe his failure to make the salutary effort to any denial of grace nor can he look to a Saviour to do for him what he is unable to do for himself. He cannot, again, substitute for self-reliance a reliance upon rites and ceremonies, a reliance reckoned by Buddha among the "ten fetters". At the very end of his life Buddha exhorted his followers to be "refuges unto themselves". A still more individualistic flavor is given to such utterances by the positive and critical element in Buddhistic teaching to which I have already called attention. Buddha would not have his followers receive spiritual truth merely on his own authority, nor again on that of tradition. As a result of the primary emphasis on Law the temper of the Buddhist is more impersonal than that of the Christian. An effusion like Pascal's *Mystère de Jésus*, profoundly religious in its own way, would have seemed to him to involve a morbid exacerbation of personality.

A statement of this kind applies above all to the original doctrine. The spirit of passionate devotion (*bhakti*) that developed in so striking a fashion in Hinduism has its equivalent in later Buddhism. In general much that I have been saying would need to be modified or even exactly reversed, if I were attempting an account of the various forms of Mahāyāna. Thus some of these forms developed a confidence in rites and ceremonies as aids to salvation that probably goes beyond anything of the kind that has been witnessed in Christianity. The example of the prayer-mill will occur to everybody. Mahāyāna has again in many of its forms encouraged the very type of theosophic and metaphysical speculation that Buddha himself repudiated. A debate regarding the relation of appearance to reality was carried on for centuries in connection with this movement which is probably at least equal in sublety to corresponding epistemological inquiries in the Occident.

To be sure Buddha was himself prodigiously subtle. This subtlety, unlike that of the Mahāyānist, was, however, psychological rather than metaphysical. Finally the spiritual autonomy or self-reliance encouraged by the original doctrine receives far less emphasis in Mahāyāna, and is at times abandoned entirely. In direct proportion to the completeness of this abandonment, Buddha ceases to be a man and becomes a god or savior. The teaching of a higher will is retained, but is so modified as to approximate at times the Christian doctrine of grace. The abandonment of spiritual self-reliance was often conscious and deliberate. According to the reasoning of certain Mahāyānists in Japan, men may formerly have been capable of achieving salvation by their own efforts, but, in view of their present degeneracy, their only hope is in the grace and mercy of Amitabha. At the same time debates arose between the partisans of grace and of good works (in the ritualistic sense) not unlike those which have gone on in certain periods of Christianity. Analogies of this kind are indeed so numerous that some have suspected a direct or indirect influence upon Mahāyāna of a distinctly gnostic type of Christianity. There is a sense, one should add, in which Buddhist believers of all types have been comparatively individualistic. They have not on the whole been submitted to a rigid outer authority. Above all the Buddhist world has never known any organization for enforcing outer authority comparable in elaborateness and effectiveness to the Roman Catholic Church, itself modelled in important respects on Roman imperial organization. One may sum up the whole subject by saying that though Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna have much in common in their strictly ethical teaching, Mahāyāna has tended to give to this teaching a radically different doctrinal setting.

Keeping this general contrast in mind we may return to Buddha's positive and psychological method of dealing with the problem of the will. In the contrast he establishes between the expansive desires and a will that is felt, with reference to these desires, as a will to refrain, he is, as I have said, an uncompromising dualist. By exercising this quality of will a man may gradually put aside what is impermanent in favor of what is more permanent and finally escape from impermanence altogether. The chief virtue for Buddha is therefore the putting forth of this quality of effort, spiritual strenuousness, as one may say. His last exhortation to his disciples was to practise this virtue (*appamāda*) unceasingly. Anyone who has grasped all that it implies has gone far in his understanding of the genuine doctrine.

We are told that the exposition by a Buddhist missionary of aphorisms on the importance of spiritual effort, similar no doubt in substance and possibly even in form to the second chapter of the present Dhammapada, led to the conversion of Asoka, an event of incalculable importance for the culture of the Far East. Asoka showed that he had caught the very spirit of the Sakya sage when he proclaimed to his subjects: "Let all joy be in effort. Let small and great exert themselves." Asoka was active in every sense of the word; so was Buddha himself for that matter, as should be sufficiently clear to anyone who considers the attention he must have given to details in the founding of his religious order. But, though Buddha and Asoka were men of action in every sense of the word, it goes without saying that they were less interested in outer than in inner action. Buddha brings all forms of work into relation with one another, asserting the final superiority of the form by which one wins to self-mastery. He develops the paradox of religion that the man who is outwardly idle may be at once more strenuously and more profitably employed than the man who is outwardly active. On one occasion a rich Brahman farmer to whom Buddha had presented himself for alms reproached him with being an idler. Buddha replied that he was engaged in an even more important form of tillage than that of the soil. "Faith is the seed, penance the rain, understanding my yoke and plough, modesty the pole of the plough, mind the tie, thoughtfulness my ploughshare and goad . . . exertion my beast of burden." As a result of this spiritual husbandry one achieves the "fruit of immortality". Everything indeed hinges upon the quality of one's working, whether one sets out to be a carpenter, a king, or a saint.

The term *Karma* (work), though sometimes used in much the same sense as *appamāda*, a term reserved for the salutary exercise of the higher will, is applied more commonly to the doctrine of the deed in general, to the affirmation in the widest possible sense that "what we have been makes us what we are". The belief in Karma in this extended sense with its correlative belief in reincarnation, was not, it is scarcely necessary to add, peculiar to Buddha. It has been all but universal in India from early times and has also appealed to important Western thinkers like Plato. However, according to the view of the orthodox Buddhist, the Master did not base his acceptance of Karma on traditional grounds but on immediate perception. To be sure the nature of the insight of a Buddha as well as the way in which Karma fulfills itself are both numbered among the "unthinkables". This much, at most, is certain, that the state of Buddhahood is conceived as a state of pure vision and that among the truths comprised in this vision is the truth that as a man sows even so he shall reap. A Buddha is supposed to be immediately aware not merely of his own Karma, but, at will, of the Karma of others. An ordinary Buddhist and even a non-Buddhist may acquire in some degree the supernormal memory that this type of vision implies, though their illumination in this particular is, we are told, compared with that of an Arhat Buddha, as the light of a candle compared with the blaze of the noonday sun.

One may note in passing that as a result of the insistence on the accountability of the individual not merely for his conduct in his present life but for that of his remoter past, two ideas coalesce in Buddhism that have tended to fly apart in the West – the idea of sudden conversion and the idea of habit. Sudden conversion is admitted by the Buddhist, but is usually represented as the result of a long habituation. The impressions and acts that have been associated with these impressions, not merely in one's present brief span of life but in one's secular past, lie hidden in what the modern psychologist would term the unconscious, and tend to give a bias to one's character and conduct both now and in one's secular future. Karma thus envisaged is a sort of fate, but a fate of which a man is himself the author and which is not at any particular moment entirely subversive of moral freedom.

(To be concluded)

Liberty Under the Old Order

HENRY CLAY EVANS, JR.

FOR a brief season during these post-War years, the word *liberty* was not uttered lightly in the Land of Freedom. It was a term to be watched with care. The army had not approved of it during the War, nor were military leaders in love with the word after peace returned; Big Business doubted its moral worth, while prohibitionists were sure there was something wrong with it. Any man who stood for liberty one hundred per cent was under deep suspicion of belonging to a weird and detestable group known as the *bolsheviki*. One rarely endorsed the term without a quick explanation that he did not stand for *license* — which is the liberty other people take of doing what you do not want them to do.

Then suddenly the word entered the vocabulary of the most respectable citizens; in the highest social circles today, one may hear it discussed with utter abandon. Mr. Herbert Hoover, whom some may remember as one-time president of the United States, has written a book on the subject. Mr. Ogden Mills, in whose newspaper the best department stores delight to advertise, has given a series of lectures about it. We have had liberty all along, it seems, even when not mentioning it, but now we are about to lose it. In its place a terrific condition known as *regimentation* is appearing, and something must be done by patriots to stop this. For example, one way would be to put a

Republican in the White House in place of Mr. Roosevelt.

This is astonishing enough. But perhaps the most surprising performance of all has been the birth, growth, and maturity of the Liberty League, a bipartisan organization of corporation lawyers in happy communion with disappointed politicians. These ardent defenders of things-as-they-used-to-be (before the stock market fell) are going to "preserve American institutions which safeguard, to citizens in all walks of life, the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness". One concrete method employed by the League is to furnish legal help free to patriotic Americans who are about to lose their liberty – or at least some of their property. In general, property-owners are to be saved from the clutches of the socialists.

As if this state of affairs were not enchanting enough, one hears of still another group which is furnishing legal help to Americans about to lose their liberty. This is the American Civil Liberties Union, which sends around lawyers when capitalists are about to deprive workingmen of their precious heritage. Thus while a Liberty League protects capitalists from the socialists, a Liberties Union saves socialists from the capitalists.

With so many varieties of liberty at stake, it is the purpose of this article to make an examination of the type of freedom enjoyed in those days when Messrs. Hoover and Mills, along with the directors of the Liberty League, lived in a country of which they approved. At that time, of course, if anyone did not like this country, he could go back to Russia where he belonged. But these are more mellow, tolerant times.

Now when men disapprove of this country, they have the easier choice of joining the Liberty League.

Perhaps a brief historical background will be of some help to the inquiry. We have been saving the country for liberty for a great many years in a most peculiar manner. The narrative is connected closely with the history of the Republican party. This remarkable collection of zealots and wheelhorses came into being around the middle of the preceding century; and its first words in its babyhood days were of freedom, which was to be given the Negro slave in the Southern part of the Federal Union. The gesture was appealing as long as one forbore to look far into the background. Then the picture became more complex.

In order to bring such a boon to the Negro slave, it was necessary to conquer the Southern whites. They were deprived of their liberty of withdrawing from a union they did not care to maintain; they were forced to submit to ten years of military rule; they were frequently forbidden the freedom of petition, or assemblage, or of choosing their own governors in a democratic manner. Proceeding further along these strange paths of freedom, the Republican party moved to insure to the former slave his civil liberties by an amendment to the Constitution. The latter forbade states to deprive any person of his rights; then it was revealed that the new business corporations of the period were "persons". As a result, the hamstrung states were not allowed to enact any laws which might curb the monopolies then throttling the liberties of small business men. So while romanticists thought about the Negroes, the courts paid closer attention to corporations; and the Republican party had registered another unique triumph in its battle for its own peculiar sort of liberty.

Down through the decades of the nineteenth century, Big Business grew with the Fourteenth Amendment as its guardian and the Republican party its handmaiden. Each year witnessed the collapse of independent business houses, the growth of large corporations, holding companies, and trusts. All the while, industrial magnates prattled of liberty and celebrated the Fourth of July. By the turn of the century, it was apparent to the more intelligent part of the populace that the Grand Old Party, while pretending to worship liberty, was on the point of shipwrecking it.

Revolt was in the air, but the Republicans pursued their course serenely. When the pretense of standing for liberty could hardly be made any longer in face of the inroads made by the Big Business machine upon all sorts of freedom, they resorted to epithets. Anyone who attacked the ruling order was a *demagogue.* When Woodrow Wilson reached the White House later on with a vigorous program for breaking up business combines and curbing Big Business pressure, he was a *socialist* disturbing good business men who were out for profits that rightfully come to men of brains and energy.

Mr. Wilson frightened the apostles of Big Business as no one had ever done before. Everything charged against Mr. Roosevelt today was said just as bitterly about Woodrow Wilson twenty years ago. But happily a war intervened to save the Republicans. All of Mr. Wilson's schemes went awry, and he himself was broken amid their wreckage. Industrialism, Big Business, and the Grand Old Party emerged triumphant.

On the threshold of the days which Messrs. Hoover and Mills hold so dear, the Republicans took charge of the country once more.

They were still saving it – this time from a new danger. The Communists were coming! And though they never did arrive, they furnished a new set of epithets to be applied to all who did not like the Ruling Order. Chief among them was the term *bolshevik*, a word of Russian origin so vague in its precise meaning to most Americans that it could be applied almost anywhere. Before it the stoutest Liberal heart was apt to tremble. All impulses toward Liberalism were viewed with misgiving. Never since the balmy days when the army ruled the Southern states, had Big Business faced less danger of opposition and revolt. With the aid of the Republican party it gave the country the regime that it desired; and evidently if the Liberty League has its way, that economic and social order of the nineteen-twenties will be restored.

It was surely a topheavy regime for a Land of Freedom. According to a *Report on National Wealth and Income* issued by our Federal Trade Commission in the rosiest period, one per cent of the American people owned fifty-nine per cent of the wealth; while barely one-tenth of the national riches was in the possession of the poorest eighty-seven per cent of the population. It would require a stout social order of freemen to preserve liberty under conditions such as these. But that was not half the story.

We were also growing into a nation of employees. The absorption of independent business concerns by Big Business, which pre-war Americans had fought with such bitterness, increased tenfold during the

Twinkling Twenties. Hence the fate of an employee in one of these big concerns is surely a good case-study of freedom during the period which the Liberty League loves to honor. Henry Ford is one of their heroes – a prototype of liberty; a champion of American individualism. But if one wants a picture of an average American in an industrial system, he surely goes down into the factory rather than into the owner's office.

Nobody bossed Mr. Ford, not even Wall Street; he ran his own independent concern. But he told his employees whether they might smoke, or dance, or stay out late at nights; and between their lives and his was all the difference in the world.

Slowly the curtain has been lifted on the picture of an American employee at his daily tasks in any industrial machine. No future lay before him brighter than that of continued employment; though perhaps he would be promoted to a point where he could enjoy the thrilling experience of being master of other men's souls in the system. Ability to do his handiwork was only one asset on the road to success. There were other qualities demanded of him by his company, such as *loyalty* and *cooperation* – words that might easily carry with them some curious meanings.

The heart-bottom wish of the American worker was "to obtain the maximum of freedom for showing what manner of man he was by the nature of his handiwork". Such was the observation of Whiting Williams after a sojourn as laborer himself in all manner of factories. The great burning problem before every employee was to retain his job; the ever-present fear was the possibility of losing it. Seasonal lay-offs occurred in many industries; or sometimes the inefficiency of an owner or manager caused the closing of business concerns and factories.

But the general consensus of opinions of writers concerned with the vital subject of a worker's bread and butter was that disagreement with a foreman or boss was the daily threat to an employee's happiness and life. Ninety-eight per cent of the labor disputes that the government was called upon to solve during the War simmered down finally to some petty quarrel between a foreman and his man, according to a member of the War Labor Board.

In many companies, well-organized and up-to-date, a daily "progress card" was kept upon which were recorded all spoiled work, arguments, absences, insubordination, and other "objective facts of importance" that would come up when there was a chance for promotion. This was a systematic way of protecting the employee from the sudden anger of his boss, it was explained. The record card could be reviewed when the boss reached a cooler moment. Sometimes these items along with other choice tidbits about a man's personal conduct were listed in a *character rating*. Of course, absences from work were checked carefully. A visit by a company representative usually took place at the home of a worker after the first or second day of non-attendance. It might be "a kindly act . . . or it might be an occasion for prying into purely personal affairs". Without trained experience, admitted one student in the field of character rating, it was indeed difficult to distinguish between *ability* and *cooperation*.

> We have a flood of literature and special lectures and consultants [wrote Hugo Diemer] preaching a philosophy of success in which how to reach the boss, how to impress him, and how to sell him ideas, overshadow the importance of basic ability and honesty. . . . The typical climber wears a mask portraying the highest ethical standards and a cheerful modesty when in the presence of higher officials. . . . He knows what the boss and his wife like to eat, read and talk about.

Though it was not quite clear from then on whether the climber sent the boss baskets of groceries or merely set himself to eating similar food, the picture was a familiar one in modern business. It applied to a factory, a store, or merely a small managerial office where typists, office boys, and clerks lived in one happy "cooperative" family. Stuart Chase had another name for them.

> The *yes-man* had no place in American pioneer tradition [he observed]. As the machine breeds specialization, increased technological unemployment, as mergers spread their threat to white-collar jobs, the case grows worse. The greater one's economic insecurity, the greater the tendency to sacrifice spiritual independence and to chant in dreary unison the simple credo of the yes-man. It is my contention that for uncounted millions of Americans the price of integrity is more than they can afford.

The particular loss of integrity to which Mr. Chase referred was involved in the spy system under which employees were rewarded for reporting on their fellow workmen. Here organization reached the point of perfection; here was loyalty burning at fever heat. Naturally no one foreman or manager could tell at once how firmly each cog was welded in the great machine; but a good neighbor-cog, loyal to his company, could find it out the first day. Perhaps an employee had a capacity for individual thinking and for leading other men that was dangerous to the smooth movement of a well-oiled mechanism. Whiting Williams told of one way to meet this menace. "In too many instances such a report is likely to lead to the *planting* of, say, a bottle of whiskey in the man's clothes, with the later discovery of it by the secret planter, who in horror at such outrageous breaking of plant rules, lands the offender on the street."

When the offender arrived on the outside pavement, the end of the drama was near. During the Twinkling Twenties he shared unemployment with at least four million other Americans. For mergers were threats not only to the independence of certain business men; ordinarily a combination was so economical that a number of workers could be dropped from the combined payroll. Machines too were appearing each year that took the place of human labor. So it was an easy matter to locate another job. "Dismissal of a workman," wrote Sidney Webb, "involves serious dislocation of his life; the demoralization attendant upon looking for work; uprooting of his home; interruption of his children's schooling; many weeks of penury for his family."

Yet it was not beyond reason that the offender upon the outside pavement still had some ability within him that a trained observer could distinguish from "cooperation". Perhaps he could work right well with another sort of boss. But his past record would ever rise to meet him.

"Except in the case of the most inexperienced novice, more consideration is probably given to the past industrial record of the applicant in determining his acceptance or rejection than to any other single factor," wrote Dr. Donald Laird.

> . . . We find prospective employers writing to previous employers for information about the skill and behavior of the applicant while in their employ. Other firms he has served, perhaps unsuccessfully, or perhaps with a record of fights, arguments, disobedience, dissatisfaction-breeding, and so on, are certain not to be mentioned [in the references he carries with him]. The obvious course in writing firms [to which he has referred] is to get a statement of the length of time in fact that the applicant served. Then if his employment record is complete for five years or more, the applicant is not holding out on probably unfavorable testimonials.

Small wonder Tead and Metcalf comment that "the black-marking of a man for a first offense may debar him from securing employment anywhere in the locality". They might have added, "and perhaps in the whole United States".

The check-up was now complete. Daily record card, visitors to the home, spying upon one's neighbor in the name of *loyalty*, ability to perform the job merely a secondary requirement, chanting the dreary song of the yes-man, an employer's blacklist for discharged workers. That was no exaggerated picture for a nation of employees; yet industry could justify every item in this familiar program. It was a normal development when a man's employment and livelihood depended upon the will and whim of a single superior in his business machine. Even spying could be listed under a less objectionable name; in high schools and colleges, where it was urged upon schoolchildren, the term used was *honor system.*

No institutions caught more readily the infectious spirit of the organized age than the new retail chain stores. Regulation was not only a necessity but a pleasure. Even the managers practised the goose-step. One in Danville, Virginia, played baseball in the city league under an assumed name because his management frowned on outside activities; another in Gulfport, Mississippi, was forced to reject repeated invitations to join a fraternal lodge, because it was against his management's policy. Pledges in respect to taking a drink or puffing a cigarette were on hand for new employees to sign in some of the chains; then any slight backsliding could be punished by expulsion because a word of honor had been broken. A daily shave was a demand made by one firm, which also instructed its department heads as to the style, color, and cut of their clothes; the purchase of a private automobile by an employee was made the subject of another company's rules; a third showed a lively interest in the attitude of clerks toward hitch-hikers on a country road. Surely a business could survive without taking a hand in such private items as these.

"Character ratings" under watchful eyes of this sort soon reached a moral height that put the early American Puritan in the background. Behavior during business hours was only one part of the record card. "We will not retain in our employ a man who, if married, does not enjoy the right kind of home life," intoned one soulful judge over the fates of other men. "Neither will we retain a man who is unable to live within his means." And in that way bank accounts entered the scope of the moral review. In fact, about the only relief for a family from the eyes of the company "operative" came on the nights when its head went back to the shop to work. To the ordinary chain store the model life for an "associate" was one wrapped up day and night in the business; if dreams could have been censored, the owners doubtless would have been happier.

When such conditions were brought to the attention of a leader of industry and men, he was quite impatient with prattlings about liberty. Such methods were necessary in the interests of Efficiency. Anyway, a fair-minded, tactful employer or manager could operate such a system without wounding or ruffling the feelings of their underlings; he might take every other method of discipline before he discharged one of his men. Not all firms stooped to use whiskey bottles as mediums for a choice frame-up; it merely occurred "too often".

But here a case-study of liberty is being made for the Liberty League, which hates regimentation and will not have it in American life. The system described above surely had within it no elements of human freedom; the possibilities for oppression were terrifying. Character ratings and record cards, moral guardians and a spy system: such are essential features of regimentation.

In fact, Big Business itself in time grew dubious of its own creation. As the Twinkling Twenties progressed, a new character was added to the drama; the personnel manager made his bow, with his life devoted to the human rights and happiness of employed men.

The utter worthlessness of the whole system as far as human liberty was concerned quickly became apparent as some solution for the helplessness of employees was sought.

Personnel work was a flower of the World War. Though some factory- and mill-owners of an earlier age with a flair for righteousness had been paternal toward their men, the "expert and devotee to science" was a twentieth-century product. A mighty literature at once emerged from the presses about him; and in it first-hand information was certainly given out on the petty meanness that so easily arose in the organized system. But the point, of course, was that evils would now be wiped away; the personnel manager was going to be the dramatic defender of human rights. If only he had been spared a scientific outlook, he might have been some help.

But as a true expert he sought refuge in more "record cards" than ever, and added mental tests for new men applying for work. The latter had already been applied to private soldiers, schoolchildren, and inmates of penitentiaries; it was fully time for industrial employees to come within their scope. One chain store, reaching out as usual for perfection, gave the same questions orally three times in order to keep a strict lookout for lying on part of the applicant; then turned down any unfortunate who tapped his foot during the performance since this showed nervous instability. But some flaw must have existed since further records from the same store showed two employees later being graduated into an insane asylum. At any rate mental tests were a relief from the ever-present employer's blacklist; a man whose past record of "non-cooperation" was choking him might be able to go through mumbo-jumbo successfully.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of personnel work was along lines of ice-cream and cake. It was determined scientifically that employees needed recreation in order to work well, but they could hardly be allowed to seek it out for themselves; so physical-culture drills entered the daily regime. There were set minutes in which every worker should relax – thus carrying the twitching of the muscles within the purview of an overseer. Parks outside the window of a factory, swimming pools, skating rinks, moving-picture halls began to dot the industrial scene. A steel magnate delving into the new lore discovered music which, according to tradition, was used with effect on savage beasts and therefore ought to be of some help with cogs. Orchestras, radios, brass bands, and pianos entered the worker's life. One valuable contribution came out of a canning factory where a manager revealed that a radio delivered its biggest *kick* if the employees paid for it themselves. "Discontent," commented an observer, "is now being smothered under fried fish, potato-salad, and ice-cream. The workers are kept so busy being grateful that they have little time for grousing."

Boldly science tackled the tender relationships between man and boss; it remodelled the latter. No longer was the model boss a hardboiled foreman who dared his workers to start something. Now he must have "a ready smile, preferably with a tooth or two missing (to look more democratic)", wrote Philip Wagner in *The American Mercury*. "He must have a ruddy complexion and a hearty Y.M.C.A. manner."

Meantime personnel managers spoke eloquently of the "human element", which they treated with "the dispassionate engineering point of view". Thrift experts taught employees how to invest wages in the stock of the company; that not only gave them more interest in their firm but made it tougher on the heart strings in case any parting seemed necessary. Intriguing little devices to reward the well-behaved by means of bonuses were invented.

But there was a limit to all good movements, as a shoe company in New York State discovered. There the happy family of workers who had invested in company stock began to wonder out loud about the profits they were supposed to receive. Rebellion was quickly nipped in the bud with a reprimand from the president: "The profit-sharing is not necessarily a permanent plan. To those who are dissatisfied with the results of last year's business, I recommend a prompt resignation. . . . I wish such would quit. I am sincere in this wish." The happy family was beginning to resemble Uncle Tom's Cabin with Eliza going out on the ice after dark. But when murmurs died out, uplift re-entered. The president, like a fond father, gave the children a golf course where for modest fees they might play the same game he did at his more select clubs.

There still remained the fact that men went into outer darkness whenever they displeased the next cog higher up in the system. So along with personnel managers came committees of fellow workers to pass upon an employee's dismissal; also to confer on items of company management. It did seem cynical to doubt the virtue of this reform; on paper the plan sounded excellent. But labor unions, which had devoted more than a century of attention to employee rights, suspected the shop committees from the start; they sounded like a pallid substitute for union pressure. When Professor Herbert Feis, of the University of Cincinnati, began to investigate their operations, he found that the calendar of business consisted mainly of a report of management decisions brought forward at previous meetings; then petty grievances were considered briefly. *Cooperation* was still at work, with employees centering on the *co-ing*.

The Filene Store, of Boston, was franker than most companies. It permitted to be published the entire proceedings of a case in which a shop committee heard the plea of an elevator operator to keep his job when his boss wanted to fire him. It was presented as an example of fairness in modern industry; as a case-study in modern liberty its revelations were startling.

Joe Dodge, the fictitious name given the criminal, had been found guilty of "freshness" by an overseer of elevator boys. So "charges" were preferred before the shop committee; "defense and prosecuting attorneys" were named; and all the trappings of a murder trial were assembled – except mercifully a gaping crowd, since the proceedings were held in secret. It was perhaps not a happy afternoon for Joe who faced the moral dangers of unemployment so well described elsewhere by Sidney Webb; but the other performers apparently enjoyed themselves hugely.

Joe was a good lawyer himself. One high moment came when he was allowed to question Miss White, a saleslady who took the role of witness for "the prosecution". According to court records, the following valuable testimony was offered:

A. [from Miss White] "I was waiting to go down."
Q. [from Joe] "I beg to differ; you were going up."
A. "I was waiting to go down."
Q. "It was when I went down that I asked you which way you were going. You said you were going up."
A. "I did not."
Q. [from Joe's attorney] "Is it your understanding that the young lady called you a liar?"

After the upward-downward movement had been threshed out, another serious charge developed. Joe, with his mind set on the old fashioned motto of "Safety First", had refused to load his elevator with as many passengers as the boss desired. Then on another occasion Joe told a saleslady to mind her own business. From these monstrous crimes Joe was eventually declared Not Guilty by a vote of seven to five, but he was duly warned that from then on his boss could dismiss him for the slightest grievance, and he was also suspended two weeks without pay.

The jury of committeemen sympathized with the boss. Joe had too much brains to operate an elevator properly. But of course the way of the wicked turned out to be hard, and after two months Joe resigned. The boss had known all along that he would; he was that type. With his usual "freshness", Joe declared in resigning that "the executive was prejudiced against him".

Evidently the path of *cooperation* was still just about the same. What happened to Joe after that we do not know. It did seem that his admitted brainpower might be used somewhere. But he was a member of the employer's blacklist after that resignation, and there were millions of other unemployed also clamoring for a right to live. Of course, there is a bare chance that science saved him; he may have found shelter elsewhere after taking an intelligence test.

The case of Joe Dodge in the end merely served to emphasize the fact that bigness itself in organization precludes real liberty. "Liberty," says Mr. Hoover, "is a thing of the spirit"; and perhaps that is what is the matter with his own peculiar type of the commodity. But for the ordinary run of us, it is a matter distinctly practical. It has to do with our relations every day to other human beings. When one man's livelihood depends absolutely upon the opinions and whims of a superior higher up in the system, then that man is not free. His privilege of casting one vote at a civic or national election is of no help to him whatsoever. His position in a privately-owned business concern is just the same as if he were in a government bureau; he is the member of a regiment in spite of all that the Liberty League may say about it.

But the leaders of industry simply closed their eyes to what was going on beneath them. At the top they were still smug in their own independence. By their side, the lawyers, doctors, and other members of the professional classes cheered for the independence of a system wherein they lost some vestige of independence every year. At the outer fringe, the farmers looked on bewildered. A freedom that involved a mortgage on a farm, barnyard, and home was not impressive. Industrialism was moving into the farming regions; if it did not take freedom away from the farmers, it exploited them so thoroughly that liberty was hardly worth while.

It was a restless, unhappy civilization buoyed on one hope alone – and that one wrapped up in a small line of tape that ticked in an endless stream from machines located in brokers' offices. Stocks and bonds were always rising and the humblest worker had been taught to invest his savings. According to some of the reputable economists, this happy feature of the period would never end; stocks and bonds had reached "a permanently high plateau".

The imaginary future did hold after all some other hope than the never-ending monotony of an employee's life. Even the thrift experts of the companies themselves spoke of the promise of future profits. Some day stocks and bonds would reach such dizzy heights that an independent income would be the fortune of a faithful, obedient worker who "cooperated" and saved. Then he could withdraw from the great system and cease to worry about its workings, for they would no longer affect him. Then he would be a free man – that is, a man who did not work. A republic that had been founded on the dignity of labor had evolved an industrial system whose members found happiness only by escaping from its clutches.

At the close of the era, every economic movement that tended to destroy small, independent business and small, free farms was being encouraged by the ruling order. The only system ever evolved in the world to protect genuine human liberty was being submerged with a business-like efficiency. In the midst of it Herbert Hoover, titular head of the Republican party, was lauding American individualism to the skies. The old, familiar game was being played once more, according to the rules used in 1860, 1880, and 1900. The Republican party, while pretending to worship liberty, was doing everything in its power to destroy it. In the history of political democracies, it is doubtful whether any party has had such an unblemished record for insincerity.

As far as the Liberty League is concerned, even the Democrats so carefully elected to high posts in the organization, in order to keep the bi-partisan flavor, seem to regard the America of the Twinkling Twenties as a Land of Freedom — as contrasted with America today when freedom is on the run. The devotion paid to liberty by members of the noble order ought to be appreciated by Liberals all over the globe. But a picture of the inside of their minds would be as fascinating as any of their tracts on the Bill of Rights. Every objection they offer now to regimentation in government bureaus would apply with equal force to that regime which most of them helped to produce and to which none of them seems to object. The only charitable explanation to be given for their present performance is that they have no comprehension whatever of that economic and social order that stands to them for liberty.

The Great Snag

A. J. Penty

Nothing could be more fatuous than the ordinary debates on the respective merits of Free Trade and Protection, and it is not surprising that the whole subject should have fallen into contempt among the intelligentsia who nowadays regard it as being, at the best, a mere secondary issue. Yet they are mistaken. The subject only appears fatuous because the real issues are never discussed. When they are, we make the discovery that so far from the fiscal question being an issue of secondary importance, it is in its logical implications the most fundamental economic issue with which politics can deal, inasmuch as it raises not merely the question whether imports should be admitted free or not but whether national policy should be directed towards self-sufficiency or universalism and whether industry should be regulated or not, for Free Trade originally meant not only all we understand by a policy of free imports, but all we understand by unfettered individual competition and *laissez-faire.*

Viewed historically in this light, the abolition of the Corn Laws in England from which Free Trade is popularly supposed to date is seen to be not the beginning but the culminating point of a struggle between two conceptions of society and economics that have differed since the fourteenth century, one of which stood for tradition, government, and balanced production, and the other for speculative theory, competition, and anarchy; for anarchy is what the Liberal *laissez-faire* no-government policy finally leads to. After the Peasants' Revolt in the fourteenth century, Free Trade gradually established itself in regard to internal trade; the abolition of the Corn Laws merely completed the process then begun by applying it to external trade. It is in the older sense of the term as applying to internal as well as external commerce that I shall speak of Free Trade.

By the middle of last century Free Trade was victorious, or to be more correct, as victorious as any economic theory can be which does not accord with the facts of society. Yet no sooner was it victorious than reaction set in against it. This reaction took two forms. In regard to external trade it took the form of Protection; in regard to internal trade and competitive conditions of labor it took the form of Socialism. Socialists realized that under the competitive condition postulated by the Trade the weakest go to the wall because there can be no equality of bargaining power between rich and poor. As a result of such conditions the richer get richer and the poor poorer until finally comes catastrophe because of the economic deadlock consequent upon the uneven distribution of purchasing power. But while Socialists saw clearly the fallacy of Free Trade in its relation to internal trade and economic arrangements, they failed to see that Free Trade in its external sense, as a policy of free imports, is open to the parallel objection that there is no equality of bargaining power between different countries. When two or more countries are joined together by Free Trade, the one that has a superiority of productive power and natural resources tends to impoverish those which suffer from an inferiority. It gets richer while the others get poorer. And because of this universal Free Trade is an unrealizable ideal, an impossible dream, for as only one country can at any time be top-dog, not more than one country at any time would feel itself at liberty to adopt a policy of free imports.

The failure of Socialists to recognize this, to understand that a policy of Protection for native industries and agriculture is the corollary of internal measures for the regulation of industry, led them to go off at a tangent and seek the salvation of society in the abolition of the institution of private property, which undesirable proposition leads Socialists' activities to partake of the nature of a collision between theorists fired with a new ideal and social and economic conditions of which they have no comprehension. Not comprehending them, they seek in vain to direct the course of events until exasperated by failure they become revolutionists and end in antagonism towards the people whose interests they originally set out to promote. This is the Nemesis of a false hypothesis. Socialism stands for a series of half-truths. It bases its propaganda on the half that is true, and its practice on the half that is false, with the results that it finds itself finally impaled on the horns of an eternal dilemma.

Protectionists, on the contrary, fell into the opposite error of rebelling against external Free Trade while acquiescing in it internally. This inconsistency did not impale Protectionists as its converse impaled Socialists on the horns of an eternal dilemma, because the trend of industrial development has been to drive every country in the direction of Protection. This development can be traced to the fact that the economic problem involved in the use of machinery has been evaded by every government in the world. The British government led the way in this ostrich-like policy when, at the time of the Luddite riots, it refused either to restrict the use of machinery, or to make any provision for those whose labor machinery displaced. Consequently the equilibrium of production and consumption of pre-machine days was upset. Society came to live by its wits and means were found of putting off the evil day by increasing the volume of production with each new labor-saving invention, which for the time being tended to keep men in employment. This is the key to the economic developments of industrialism which frustrate all efforts at stabilization. With ever-increasing outputs, it became a matter of life and death, first for England and then for other industrialized countries, to find a succession of new markets in which to dump their surplus commodities and obtain food and raw materials.

But as no country can afford to be the consumer of the machine-made goods of other countries indefinitely, since to do so would gradually drain it of its liquid capital, it came about that once the ball was set rolling, one country after another went in for machinery and adopted tariffs to protect its infant industries, each in turn became perplexed with problems of surplus production, and became a competitor for markets; for every country in the world proved itself to be as blind to the implications of machine production as Great Britain. As the numbers of industrialized countries grew, they were driven to the ends of the earth to find new markets to exploit, until at last a time came when the process could go no further, for expansion had reached its limit. When that point was reached, competition became greatly intensified, the industrialized countries came into violent collision with each other, and an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust was created, whose issue was war.

This, I submit, is the economic explanation of the Great War. It was implicit in the suppression of the Luddite riots which committed society to belief in increasing exploitation of machinery, while every plea for a return to sanity has for a century been silenced by the phrase "You can't put the clock back". When they have said that, most people assume they have delivered the supreme and final judgement. Yet it is only necessary to reflect for a moment to realize the folly and absurdity of such a remark. It means that a world thrown into confusion should not seek to recover its equilibrium by returning to those institutions and traditions which were for it like solid ground but should press forward even to catastrophic war, which is the logical ending of existing economic and mechanical developments. To adopt such an attitude towards machine industry is to deny our free will, and to assume that we have no control over economic conditions of our own making. It is a lie, and I measure my words when I say that whoever assumes this attitude, whoever turns down any proposal on the ground that "You can't put the clock back" casts a vote for war, for if the clock is not to be put back by taking thought it will be put back by catastrophe, since civilization must by one means or another recover the equilibrium which it has lost.

Since the War, the economic process has developed still further. Once foreign trade had reached its limit of expansion, contraction followed. Individual countries, finding it impossible to dispose of their ever-increasing surplus of goods, took to raising their tariffs in order to secure their home markets entirely for themselves – which measures first reduced the volume of foreign trade and then, by compelling other countries to raise their tariffs still higher in self defence, set in motion a movement whereby the volume of foreign trade must inevitably shrink and shrink until exchange is limited to such articles as each nation is unable to make for itself. Thus the wheel comes full circle. The movement towards Free Trade and universal markets reacts to bring into existence a movement in the contrary direction, towards economic nationalism and self-sufficiency. It was bound to happen. For the era of universal markets belonged essentially to an age of transition while the nations of the world were engaged in equipping themselves industrially, and it inevitably comes to an end as the process is complete. Add to that the fact that there is not in existence any measure of equality of productive power and natural resources between different countries such as Free Trade theory supposes and we begin to realize that universal Free Trade is an unrealizable ideal.

There are other and very substantial reasons for believing that policies of self-sufficiency are in the interests of society. An American economist, Henry C. Carey, who wrote about the middle of last century, enquired why farming communities in the United

States exhibited such a marked tendency to dispersal and isolation; and he traced it to the fact that the production of food for foreign markets, in which the American farmer was largely engaged, tended to exhaust the soil, because when the products of the soil are exported to foreign countries the manures go to enrich foreign soils, with the result that the soil of the exporting country becomes impoverished. A later American economist, Simon D. Patten, pointed out that the production of food for foreign markets led also to the impoverishment of the soil for another reason – that it led farmers to disregard the need of a rotation of crops and to grow the same crop year after year until the soil was exhausted.

The discovery by Carey of the reason for the dispersal of American farming communities led him to deny the existence of any law of diminishing returns. This law, he contended, was not a law of nature but of the economists who were mistaken about the facts. Diminishing returns are the penalty of departing from the law of nature which decrees that whatever is taken from the land in the form of food must be put back in the form of manures. The discovery of this truth led him to believe that the remedy for the condition of American agriculture was to be found in the growth of an urban population which would, by providing a local market for agricultural produce, enable food to be consumed near to where it was produced. This growth could only follow the adoption of Protection, for American industries could not in his day stand up against the superior cheapness of British manufactures. This argument is valid, but it has lost some of its force in these days, because since the introduction of water-carriage of sewage manures get destroyed whether the products of the soil are consumed at home or abroad. Some day society will have to face this problem. I am told chemical manures are no substitutes for organic ones.

But Free Trade not only results in the dispersal and isolation of agricultural populations but in the concentration of population in huge towns. For just as we saw Free Trade favored one country at the expense of another, so it favors one district at the expense of another, and this leads to gross inequalities in the distribution of population. Hence we make the discovery that overcrowding and the housing problem are results of Free Trade. If it be objected that Protectionist countries also have overcrowding and housing problems, I would point out that all countries except Russia are Free Trade in respect to their internal economic arrangements. The United States is a protected country, so far as its relations with other countries are concerned, but within its own boundaries it is a Free Trade unit three thousand miles across. The Free Trade principle operates within that area just as in England.

Considering all the evils that flow from the application of the principles of Free Trade, for it is no exaggeration to say that the history of Free Trade is one long record of failure, the question may reasonably be asked, Why does belief in it still persist? The answer is, Because Protectionist writers have not the courage of their convictions, they have never dared to carry the principle of Protection to its logical conclusion which would make it an intellectually defensible proposition. Nearly all Protectionists accept universal Free Trade as their ideal and are prepared to justify Protection only as a measure of temporary economic expediency, though since universal Free Trade is an economic and political impossibility, as we saw, they are under no obligation to make this concession to the position of Free Traders.

To believe in Protection only as a measure of temporary economic expediency was the position of List, who is the best-known of Protectionist writers. Carey broke with this position, becoming finally an advocate of Protection as the only rational policy for all countries under all circumstances. Yet though his defence of Protection is more defensible than that of List it is not conclusive; and the reason for this is that it is impossible to refute the case for Free Trade except by repudiating *in toto* economic individualism which, like his predecessors he was not prepared to do; and that is why his position is also finally weak. Free Trade as understood by Cobden and his predecessors was a consistent and defensible theory because it stood for economic individualism in regard to both home and foreign trade. In consequence the arguments by which it is supported can only be met by those who repudiate economic individualism internally and externally, at home and in foreign trade; they certainly cannot be met by Protectionists who support competition for home trade and repudiate it abroad, or Socialists who repudiate competition for home and support it for foreign trade. It is this inconsistency of Protectionists that gives Free Traders their sense of superiority. All the same, there is more truth in Protection than Free Trade. Protection may only stand for a half truth, but Free Trade is an untruth; its consistency is that of a consistent lie.

While Free Trade escaped demolition at the hands of Protectionists because they were not prepared to repudiate economic individualism internally as well as externally, it escaped the attacks of Socialists because Protectionists acquiesced in the institutions of private property and the private management of industry. And so it came about that, unable to support Protection, Socialists with still greater inconsistency came to support Free Trade; mainly, I imagine, because to support Free Trade enabled them to avoid, for the time, embarrassing political entanglements. Fabians and other moderate Socialists were accustomed to justify their inconsistency in demanding the abolition of competition internally and acquiescing in it externally on the grounds that Free Trade was a stage in evolution. Verbally they were in agreement with Marx; but the interpretation they put upon their words was fundamentally different, for when Marx gave his support to Free Trade it was not because, like Fabians, he imagined it operated constructively, but because he knew it worked destructively. There is no doubt about this, for he defined his position in a speech on Free Trade delivered before the Democratic Club in Brussels on January 9th, 1848, when he said:

> Generally speaking, the Protective system in these days is conservative, while Free Trade works destructively. It breaks up old nationalities and carries antagonism of proletariat and bourgeoisie to the uttermost point. In a word, the Free Trade system hastens the social revolution. In this sense I am in favor of Free Trade.

There is, I think, no doubt that Marx was right in maintaining that Free Trade works destructively and hastens the revolution. Perhaps that is the reason why so many university graduates drilled in the principles of Free Trade became Bolsheviks. But Marx is wrong in saying that Free Trade breaks up old nationalities. What it has done, is not to break them up but by reaction to transform passive nationalism into militant nationalism.

In another direction Free Trade works destructively. It degrades spiritual life by exalting cheapness into a fetish, by reason of the fact that the demand for cheap things result in the public losing all sense of value.* But actually Free Trade does not make for cheapness, as is popularly supposed – a fact which

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* The pursuit of cheapness first corrupts people by leading them to put up with nasty things because they are cheap; then it leads them to demand nasty things on the assumption that they must be cheap; and finally to reject beautiful things which are cheap on the assumption that if they were really beautiful they would be expensive. Thus the fetish of cheapness reacts to create a market for expensive ugliness which in turn reacts to depress that for genuine art products. There can be no doubt that is what happens. It is proved by the dilemma in which every artist finds himself today. If he prices his work high he may find it left on his hands because the public may say they can't afford to buy. If, on the other hand, to avoid this happening he prices it low, he will in all probabilities have it left on his hands because the public will assume him to be an inferior artist. In architecture the demand for cheapness leads to a demand for incompetence, for, as in most cases the public have only the vaguest idea what the cost of any building should be, they come to patronize "dud" architects because the ugliness of such work leads them to assume it must be cheap. At any rate this is the only explanation I can find of a great deal of phenomena connected with the practice of architecture, which for long I was accustomed to regard as entirely irrational. It was only after thinking about it for the better part of a lifetime that I came to connect the market for incompetence with the Free Trade fetish of cheapness.

English Free Traders have discovered since Protection was adopted since in 1931, for in spite of the predictions of Free Traders, prices have not risen. While it is true that to buy in the cheapest market enables the individual purchaser at any given moment to get things cheaply, it does not follow that a policy of free imports makes for general cheapness, because it gives rise to a great deal of industrial disorganization and disorganization is expensive. It is not without significance that the cost of living has, in spite of periodical falls, exhibited a general tendency to rise in all industrialized countries. We take such rises for granted – or we did until lately, for it never occurs to most people that with every increase in the use of machinery the cost of living should fall instead of rising.

Still less does it occur to them to connect such increased prices with Free Trade – using the term in its original sense; for as I have pointed out, all industrialized countries, except Russia and to some extent Italy, are Free Trade in respect to their internal economic arrangements. The most spectacular rise which has taken place is in connection with building, which has quadrupled in this century – and as this affects rents, it enters at every point into the cost of living. Then Free Trade policy leads, as we saw, to the concentration of population in big towns, which, by increasing costs of distribution, travelling, etc., further increases the cost of living. And we ought not to overlook the fact that to get cheap food (which as a matter of fact England does not get) England is required to spend much more on the navy than would otherwise be necessary in order to protect her food supplies. And further, there is more than a doubt whether even if Free Trade did lower prices, the money saved would ever find its way into the pocket of the consumer at all, for the middleman is in a position to intercept what there is. Such considerations suggest Free Trade is a penny wise and pound foolish policy. The logical end of the cheap food fetish is famine.

Though cheapness is a fetish among Free Traders today, it was not originally a part of Free Trade theory. On the contrary, when in the eighteenth century Quesnay first formulated the theory, he advocated it because he thought it would improve the condition of the French peasantry by raising the price of grain, and he attacked the fetish of cheapness as an illusion, showing how conditions generally would improve with a rise of prices. Yet Free Trade today is advocated for reasons the exact opposite of those for which it was originally advanced, and in spite of this *volte face* its prestige with the intelligentsia remains undiminished.

The reason for this is, I think, that as Protection has too often in the past been associated with political corruption, Free Traders enjoy a sense of moral superiority. Not that Free Trade can wear the white flower of a blameless life, for Free Trade leads to corruption as much as Protection; but it is a kind that is more subtle, and not so easily detected. Under Free Trade, great vested interests arise in imports, which function at the expense of society; thus it fosters monopolies, in the same way as tariffs do. In Great Britain they are able to prevent the revival of agriculture, which is urgently necessary to balanced production. Such evils are implied in Free Trade principles, but the corruption associated with Protection does not flow from its principles, but from the alliance of external Protection, which is communal in principle, with internal Free Trade, which is individualist.

It is the attempt to combine these opposed principles that opens the door to corruption; for when so combined, the selfish individualist spirit that governs Free Trade turns external Protection to anti-communal purposes. But if it were made a law that any industry that sought the protection of a tariff should consent to a control of prices, or in other words, that a protected industry should sell its products at Just and Fixed prices, no room would be left for corruption. Industries that suffer real hardships under Free Trade would willingly consent to having their prices controlled, while industries whose only aim in seeking the protection of a tariff is to increase their profits at the expense of the community, would keep at a respectful distance from parliamentary lobbies, for no profiteering industry will consent to a control of prices. No question of special privilege would then arise and privileges then would become dependent upon the acceptance of responsibilities.

I have referred to industries which suffer real hardship under Free Trade. Free Traders always seek to evade the problem which such industries present by dismissing them as inefficient. In *New Frontiers*, Mr. Wallace speaks of the desirability of a plan for liquidating inefficient industries. It is a suicidal policy, for if carried to its logical conclusion, it might happen that every industry in the United States would need to be liquidated. It is as if a schoolmaster made it a rule to expel the boys who were at the bottom of the class, and in the end found he had only one pupil left. In an unequal world there will always be some industry, or some boy, that is relatively inefficient.

But what do we mean by an "efficient" industry? One that can compete successfully? But that may mean many things. It may mean that it is better organized. But it may also mean that workers are tyrannized over, speeded up, and slave-driven. Indeed, competing successfully always involves these methods in the long run, for a well-organized industry ceases to be successful when a competitor appears which is not only well-organized but a slave-driver in addition. So in liquidating "inefficiency" we shall liquidate human values at the same time. Competitive efficiency has no room for human values, nor will we get these values back again until we find something more worthy of worship than an efficiency which when complete is Hell under another name. Mr. Wallace overlooks the fact that it is efficient and not inefficient industries that cause all our troubles.

However, this is a digression, for efficiency has nothing to do with Free Trade as such, but rather with machinery. Machinery tends to thrust men out of the economic scheme. The advice to be efficient is personal – a policy by which the individual about to be thrust out may save himself by pushing someone else out.

Free Trade is a religion: it has nothing to do with facts. Yet it is supported by so many plausible arguments as to deceive even the elect. Anyone who challenges it finds himself up against something much more formidable than an economic theory; he finds himself battling against a fixed habit of mind; a thing decided upon and not open to discussion, a dogma held sacred beyond living memory. Most Free Traders are like the Quaker lady, who when asked why she believed in Free Trade replied that it was because her father had told her it embodied a great moral principle and she was firmly convinced it had only been accidentally omitted from the Ten Commandments; and who would without a doubt have died on the spot could she have been enlightened as to the truth; for the great moral principle turns out on examination to be the very unmoral doctrine that self-interest is a principle to which the regulation of society may be entrusted, on the assumption that the self-regarding instincts of men would if given free play so balance and neutralize each other as to eventuate in an equilibrium of good. It was Cobden and Bright who effected the transformation. By associating Protection with the taxation of food, they were able by appealing to sentiment rather than to the mind of the electorate to infuse a moral, even a religious, spirit into the repeal of the Corn Laws*; and this has remained a source of moral and intellectual bewilderment ever since, for experience proves that the appeal to liberty and principles of Free Trade can be used to justify every social abuse and every form of economic oppression.

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* Cobden "said in a letter to his brother, he had convinced himself that a moral and even a religious spirit might be infused into the question of the Corn Laws, and that if it [Free Trade] were agitated in the same manner as the old question of slavery, the effect would be irresistible". *The Life of Richard Cobden* by John Morley, Vol. I, p. 143, 1896 edition.

Another reason why Free Trade is so stubborn is because its roots are deep in history and in our intellectual tradition. It derives from the Law of Nature which, though it has entirely dropped out of the political consciousness, exercised an influence in European social and political thought from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century that is difficult to exaggerate. During that period its sanction was sought for every idea of reform, while it was associated with every popular rising from the Peasants' Revolt to the French Revolution. Yet it began its career as a purely academic theory, originating among the Stoics, who postulated the existence of a natural condition of society, prior to the formation of states, in which men were free and equal, and the principles of liberty obtained. Yet it was never at any time a scientific theory resting upon ascertained fact, but a hypothesis framed for the purpose of distinguishing between the ideal and the actual, the primitive and the conventional, though the grounds of the distinction remained somewhat uncertain, as each writer gave his own interpretation as to what constituted the law. Because of this the Law of Nature became a changing hypothesis, adapting itself to changing mental and social conditions; until in the eighteenth century, when it reached its final form, it was interpreted as postulating the existence in society of a power capable of its own internal volition of maintaining a social and economic equilibrium which would assert itself in proportion as governments abandoned all attempts to direct the course of social and economic development. It was this latter conception that gave rise to the theory of Free Trade, and explains why, in spite of repeated failures, it remains a force which at this day must still be reckoned with.

If universal Free Trade were a realizable ideal we could admire the tenacity with which its advocates cling to a forlorn hope. But considering it is not, we can only be appalled at the superstition and credulity of which it is evidence. If order is ever to be restored to the universe, it will first have to make its appearance in the mind of man, and if order is to be restored to the mind of man, it will be necessary among other things to uproot the Free Trade theory, for it gets in the way of everything. It is to a great extent responsible for the paralysis that has overtaken the League of Nations by leading it to look in a wrong direction for the solution of the economic problem. It stands in the way of any restriction of the use of machinery – which, as we have seen, is absolutely indispensable to any solution of the economic problem, because so long as people assume that the future is to be discovered in a revival of international trade instead of the pursuit of a policy of relative self-sufficiency, they will naturally be opposed to any restriction to its use, as it would weaken competitive power. Thus it paralyzes constructive activity. And last but not least, it makes Mr. Wallace apologetic when he does the right things.

Until the Free Trade ideology and prestige is abolished the modern world will be as a house divided against itself, for its instincts will travel in one direction and its theory in another. Many people who know nothing of economics support Free Trade because it appears to them to be in harmony with the ideal of culture which they assume should be international. Whether this is true or false depends on how internationalism is interpreted, for while it is true that the high points of culture are international, it is certain that a culture will lack reality unless its roots are national, not to say local. But however desirable internationalism may be in some directions as a cultural ideal, it is neither possible nor desirable as an economic arrangement, as has too often been hastily assumed; and the best proof of this is that so far from economic internationalism furthering the ideals of culture by promoting the arts of life and inaugurating an era of peace and goodwill, as in Victorian times it was assumed would be the case, experience has proved international trade to be destructive of the arts wherever it has penetrated; while by making each nation the cut-throat rival of the rest it does anything but encourage peace and goodwill. And this is reasonable, for nations which pursue policies of national self-sufficiency have less reason to quarrel with each other than those who follow international policies; while nations with normal and mixed economics will understand each other better than the nations of specialists which competition under Free Trade brings into existence.

Dixie Looks at Mrs. Gerould

CLEANTH BROOKS, JR. *and*
ROBERT PENN WARREN

THIS then is our dilemma. We are given sentimental portraits . . . (Viola of *Twelfth Night*, for example, or Perdita of *The Winter's Tale*, obviously instances of sugary sentimentality. No flesh and blood girl ever sat for either portrait, and if any had, the impossibly fanciful background against which these characters perform their pleasant little romances is enough to vitiate any original realism.) On the other hand, the degenerate upper classes (Goneril and Regan), the country boors (Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Justice Shallow), the tavern characters (Bardolph and Falstaff) seem real. If the Elizabethan citizen had wanted the Northerner (a Massachusetts lady, who, according to the contributors' column of *The American Mercury*, is "a frequent contributor of stories, essays, and verse to the magazines") to forget the corruption at court, the outbursts of Shylock-baiting, the horrible tortures, which are duly recorded by the historians, he should have looked to his fiction. As it is, literary evidence is to the effect that citizenship in Elizabethan England was on a lower level than elsewhere. When charm and breeding appear, they are nearly always mitigated by moral defeatism (consider Hamlet, for instance) and tribal vanity (King Lear and Othello) – an unfortunate combination, for they seem to isolate the man in an impermeable container within which eventually he, most unintelligently and unconstructively (Hamlet, again), dies. . . . It is a very depressing literature, my friends!

The preceding judicious summary of Elizabethan literary heritage is a fair sample of the critical method of Katherine Fullerton Gerould, who contributed to the February issue of *The American Mercury* an instructive essay called, modestly enough, "A Yankee Looks at Dixie". Of course, Mrs. Gerould did not, and would never, one is sure, under any circumstances, be blasphemous about the literary spokesmen of the "spacious times of great Elizabeth", for Elizabethan literature is safely on ice these three hundred years, is a museum-piece, and is "cultural" – though this is not by any fault of Mrs. Gerould. "Culture" and "cultural" are terms which – and not in any crude sociological sense – flow felicitously from Mrs. Gerould's pen.

But the paragraph is not entirely unfair to Mrs. Gerould. Aside from a few obvious changes of tense and the substitution of Elizabethan characters for Southern, the words are Mrs. Gerould's very, very own; and the indictment is the same. For it would be as difficult for her to find what she calls "nice" people in Elizabethan literature (or Greek, for that matter) as in modern Southern fiction. At least on this point the contemporary practitioners of the art of fiction in the ex-Confederate states need not be embarrassed by the comparison.

She does, she admits, find some "nice" people, who, she says, are delineated with "some of the old sentimentalizing". "*So Red The Rose*, for example, is as sugary and unconvincing as the Southern fiction of the nineteen-hundreds. Miss Glasgow's later utterances vibrate with a sustained transcendental sweetness that has little to do with the modulations of reality." But to make a few more substitutions in the object of Mrs. Geroud's somewhat impressionistic criticism: "*The Winter's Tale*, for example, is as sugary and unconvincing as the *Arcadia*, by Sir Philip Sidney, of the fifteen-eighties. Mr. William Shakespeare's later utterances, *The Tempest*, for example, vibrate with a sustained transcendental sweetness. . . ." Or to try again: "The utterances of Percy Bysshe Shelley vibrate. . . ." Or again: "The utterances of William Blake. . . ." But the game is too easy.

Mrs. Gerould's essay is scarcely important. Or if important, only because it provokes a question: how was such a veteran "contributor of stories, essays, and verse to the magazines" led into such a muddle? It is very difficult to analyze the presuppositions of Mrs. Gerould's essay, for the essay represents a dilution of fashionable ideas and attitudes, a pre-digested pap; that is to say, the essay represents a journalistic sensibility functioning at a very low temperature. But where did she get the pap, or rather, what by her presentation is pap? She is a practitioner, albeit an amateur and tentative one, of the current socio-economico-pathologico-Marxist critical method. Now, in the hands of John Strachey, Hamilton Basso, Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, Granville Hicks, *et al.*, this method has led, though not inevitably, to some trenchant, instructive, provocative, and even plausible, remarks. But children should not play with fire, nor, as a matter of fact, with Karl Marx, even when at third-hand. It is possible to surmise, after reading her essay, that she is not in the slightest degree aware of her affiliations with the author of *Das Kapital*, and might be horrified to pursue, by the logic of her method, the implications of some of the questions which she so blithely provokes. She might be horrified because she is so busily engaged in her genteel diversion of hunting "nice" people in literature and of being titillated by the "old sickening sweetness" and the "new sickening sourness".

But back to Mrs. Gerould as an exponent of the new criticism. If it seems somewhat unsporting to test the absurdity of her method by applying it to the Elizabethans (to whom, in a superficial sense, it may be fair), what about applying it to other contemporary American novelists? Willa Cather has given us "sentimental portraits" in *Shadows on the Rock* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, loving bits of archaeological exercise; or "desuetude" in *My Mortal Enemy* and *The Professor's House*. Fortunately, other representatives of the Middle West, Lewis, Dreiser, Anderson, are not softened by such sentimentality, and, by Mrs. Gerould's most congenial logic, are therefore "truthful". They are not "flattering", but their brand of truth provides a "very depressing literature". Edith Wharton has given us "degenerated upper classes" in *The Age of Innocence* and "moral defeatism" in *Ethan Frome*. But let Mrs. Gerould not forget Mike Gold's unflattering remarks on Thornton Wilder's performance, or John Strachey's analysis of Archibald MacLeish's "fascist unconscious". With particular application to Mr. Gerould's own bailiwick there is Eugene O'Neill, who flourishes best on a straight diet of Freud plus over-ripe Puritanism, and especially Puritanism of the upper classes, as is testified by *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra.* And for lechery, though a lechery somewhat tainted by idealism, *Desire Under the Elms* remains a high-water mark, rivalled only by some of Caldwell's more uninhibited moments. Hard as it is to believe in the delinquency of a region that has fostered the moral certitude of Cotton Mather and Mrs. Gerould, O'Neill's testimony is corroborated – God save the mark! – by an evidently unimpeachable witness, Erskine Caldwell. Perhaps Mrs. Gerould has, in the course of her busy career as a writer of stories, essays, and verse for the liberal magazines neglected to acquaint herself with Mr. Caldwell's New England *vignettes*; or, just possibly, she believes his powers of observation to be impaired in more northerly latitudes.

But Mrs. Gerould has covered herself. She writes:

> Northerners know that New England and the Middle West have not been fairly dealt with by most novelists. Yet we do not deny, as I have said, that the exaggerations of Northern fiction are based on fact; that writers have but made more salient, more dominant, more picturesque, traits that are actually there. If fictional reports from Dixie agree in making callousness, bigotry, and stupidity outstanding traits of the Southern white, we need not believe in their dominance, but we must suspect their presence.

The proposition that the worst of us have some good and the best some bad breathes the air of sweet reasonableness commemorated in the old rhyme, but it scarcely can be submitted as evidence of any great perspicuity or a topic worth a magazine article. But this is most decidedly not Mrs. Gerould's point; it is only a passing attack of cold feet, or an atavistic twitch of the good old Puritan (and indeed Christian) doctrine of original sin.

But what is her point? Her point is: "I do not like you, Dr. Fell." Consequently, a literary document that is favorable in any respect whatsoever is *ipso facto* romantic and sentimental; and unfavorable reports are, obviously, damning sociological evidence. For Mrs. Gerould allows the Southern writer only two alternatives: to tell the unpleasant truth or to falsify it. For she has decided in advance that the "unpleasant truth" is the only kind of truth available for a Southern writer. If Mrs. Gerould were willing to apply the same type of critical logic to the rest of American literature (*Main Street*, *Elmer Gantry*, *Boston*, *The Titan*, *An American Tragedy*, etc.) or, as has been intimated, to Elizabethan literature, then she, the white ewe lamb, might lie down in amity with the Marxian lion.

Mrs. Gerould, naturally, will hotly deny the foregoing accusations. She may say that her point is really this: "The South has become our most articulate section. There is a vast amount of Southern fiction, fresh every month. Yet Southerners still do not like it. New Englanders who can impersonally applaud a book like James Gould Cozzens' *The Last Adam* cannot quite understand this unreconstructed touchiness." There are many Southerners who can't read books or anything else; many who can read but don't; many who don't like the books they do read about the South; and many who like some books about the

South and do not like others. This last group has not fallen into the critical error of lumping all books together merely on the brute basis of subject-matter – an error in which Mrs. Gerould has, apparently, hardened her heart. She does not seem to understand that a distaste for the complete works of T. S. Stribling does not carry the corollary of a distaste for the fiction of William Faulkner; or that a taste for the works of William Faulkner might carry the corollary of a taste for the fiction of Stark Young. Certainly one would never guess from her essay that she would understand distinctions drawn among Erskine Caldwell's very considerable power as a humorist, his relatively feeble grasp of tragic effect, his natural instinct for acute observation, and the untarnished simplicity of his mind when promulgating sociological panacea. But it might relieve Mrs. Gerould's embarrassment to learn that so distinguished a critic as Mr. Hamilton Basso, who is himself a Southern novelist, has on occasion fallen into the same error. It might, however, afford Mrs. Gerould somewhat less relief to reflect that Mr. Gerald Johnson, the distinguished Southern journalist, has often made that error.

The South is, after all, nothing more than Mrs. Gerould's Dr. Fell. But an occasional phrase does something to elaborate her attitude. Within the short space of a thousand words or so Mrs. Gerould indulges herself four times with *callousness*, five times with *bigotry*, three times with *ignorance* and *sloth*, and, with gratifying self-restraint, only once with *stupidity*. These are the deadly sins of the South. The terms in which the invective is uttered are scarcely novel. The novelty in the matter resides rather in her method of accounting for the particular sins. Another eminent New Englander once accounted for most of these qualities as a result of slavery. Emerson said:

> Life has not a parity of value in the free state and in the slave state. In one, it is adorned with education, with skillful labor, with arts, with long prospective interests, with sacred family ties, with honor and justice. In the other, life is a fever; man is an animal, given to pleasure, frivolous, irritable, spending his days in hunting and practising with deadly weapons to defend himself against his slaves and against his companions brought up in the same idle and dangerous way.

But since the Emancipation Proclamation has been in force some seventy years, Mrs. Gerould is compelled to broaden the base of her explanation and to adopt a tone of less high-pitched moral fervor.

As the smoke of Mrs. Gerould's literary barrage clears away, she is seen advancing upon the true object of her attack – the poor, unlettered hind, against whom she brings into play all the weapons of her refinement. Agriculture is the nurse, it seems, of the peculiar ills of the South. "Whatever one may think of the brutalizing effect of machines, no one, I believe, will deny that a certain callousness has always gone with cultivation of the soil. Humanitarianism, one suspects, was born in towns." The first of these pronouncements, no one will deny, is a bit rough on Robert Frost, who used to write poems in the evenings after he had been cultivating his moral callousness all day in the hay-field, and quite as rough on Robert Burns, the shepherd Psalmist, and Jesse Stuart. (Incidentally, *The American Mercury* is broad-minded enough – one might even say, inconsistent enough – to run, cheek by jowl, with Mrs. Gerould's refined effusion, a story by Jesse Stuart, who writes with the moral callousness of a Southerner *and* a farmer.) The second pronouncement, about the birth of humanitarianism, makes it seem odd that Nazareth was a country village, and the manger of Bethlehem not a tool locker in a Ford garage. But again to Mrs. Gerould: "Agricultural civilizations, the reader considers, have never tended, in themselves, to foster psychologic sensitiveness. Neither the growing of crops, nor the hunting of foxes, nor the breeding of horses encourages it."

These last two sentences reveal most clearly the fallacy which underlies Mrs. Gerould's whole essay. With the term, "in themselves," Mrs. Gerould covers herself and seems to be uttering a truth which no reasonable man would care to deny. But she is, presumably, out for larger game than a single trite truism. She obviously implies that the South is worse off than the rest of the country *because* of its agricultural basis. Granting that the practices of agriculture do not "in themselves" foster psychologic sensitiveness, how much psychologic sensitiveness do the following activities "in themselves" foster? Banking, running a bucket shop, buying cheap and selling dear, screwing on Bolt 38 in an automobile plant, serving as counsel in divorce cases, sweeping an asphalt street, or running an advertising agency to flood the tonsils of the American public with gargles condemned by *The Journal of the American Medical Association?*

But this is not the point. Mrs. Gerould is really raising a comparison of an agricultural society with some other type of society. But what type? The true antithesis of an agricultural society is not urban as such, for agricultural societies have always had cities, including Periclean Athens, the Rome of Cincinnatus, the Jerusalem of Solomon, Elizabethan London, and Concord, Massachusetts, of the "golden day". And, of course, Chartres, an agricultural market town of thirteenth-century France, erected a cathedral which captured the imagination of Henry Adams, a citizen of New England itself. After all, Mrs. Gerould is rather breath-taking in the breadth of her condemnation of agricultural society, for almost every society prior to the Industrial Revolution was an agricultural one. The true antithesis of an agricultural society is an industrial society, and such an industrial society is not necessarily exclusively metropolitan. There may be a wheat factory as well as a wheat farm.

The South is certainly suffering from ills – the same ills indeed, ultimately, which New England is suffering from. But Mrs. Gerould, declining to consider New England a patient, has rather merely indulged herself in the easy and superficial comparison of an industrial society with an agricultural. Not that the comparison is made explicit. It is merely implied, but it is from the implied comparison that Mrs. Gerould's attack on the South derives its force. Mrs. Gerould's preference for the industrial society is clear, and it is based ultimately, it is to be observed, on the same grounds as those of Sinclair Lewis's character Babbitt.

The South, an enfeebled remnant of an agricultural society, has been attempting to defend, not wisely and not too well – not even whole-heartedly – some of the values inherent in such a society. The appropriate New England culture, not from defeat but from a surfeit of victory, succumbed several generations ago. Mrs. Gerould blames the leaders of the South because they are not "fitted to lead the folk out of ignorance, sloth, and bigotry". Professor Morison, of Harvard and Oxford, a writer whose knowledge of history is perhaps less impressionistic, or transcendental, than Mrs. Gerould's, has dolorously commented: New England, that section which once nourished generations of philosophers, teachers, preachers, poets, and statesmen, has, since the Civil War, produced a "mongrel breed of politicians sired out of abolition on profiteering".

But a discussion of the "desuetude" into which New England leadership has fallen is irrelevant here (even though the issue of *The American Mercury* which carries Mrs. Gerould's piece also carries, certainly without malice, an article on Jim Curley, boss of Massachusetts); that is, it would be irrelevant here except that it might bring home to Mrs. Gerould the fact that the South and New England and the other sections of the country are in the position of survivors on a raft in the middle of a stormy sea. Bickering among the survivors is hardly of value except in so far as it may afford instruction in principles which, possibly, could lead to a common salvation. Mrs. Gerould's bickering is hardly instructive.

One more word to Mrs. Gerould. She announces with Christian charity that she has been "patient, all my life, with mocking birds, okra, and Southern accents". The announcement smacks a little of Margaret Fuller's more widely publicized announcement that she had "decided to accept the Universe". One remembers Carlyle's remark, "Gad, she'd better."

Notes on Liberty and Property

ALLEN TATE

A LITERARY man is likely to think that property is quite simple: it is something you *own*. A second glance dispels the illusion. For property rights even in the simplest society are not absolute, but relative. And only by thinking of them as relative – subject to obligation, limitation, and even confiscation – is it possible to understand any kind of property, particularly the modern corporate variety. The simplicity of mere ownership does not bear analysis, even by a literary man.

If property is a relative term, so is liberty, and in exactly the same way. For to the extent to which a man controls the property by which his welfare is insured, is the man possessed of liberty. It is impossible to think of liberty apart from property, property apart from liberty.

But liberty since the time of Marx has ceased to mean merely individual liberty. Here, then, the crucial issue between property and collectivism is whether any meaning that the word liberty has can be attributed to a group or is strictly the attribute of an individual who enjoys a certain control of the means of production. Can a group own property? If it can, may it be said that a group as large as a whole state can own it? This question, to be answered in any way that makes sense, must be looked at practically. For legal ownership does not always mean effective ownership. There is a point at which effective ownership ceases, although the legal fictions sustaining "property" may hold that beyond that point ownership endures. Effective ownership ceases at the point where a certain kind of effective control ceases. So a defender of the institution of private property will question not only the collectivist state but also large corporate property.

When the means of production are "owned" by the people, the control passes to the state. When a large part of the means of production, say one of the heavy industries, is owned by thirty thousand stockholders, the control of their ownership passes to a small group of men. In each case, collectivist ownership or corporate ownership, the property rights are legal. A large group then may legally own property. But is its ownership in any sense *effective*? A man owns a hundred thousand dollars' worth of stock in the United States Steel Corporation. His property rights in that corporation entitle him, apart from the largely fictitious "privileges" of such ownership, to a certain cash dividend. He may also sell his stock. The dividend and the privilege of selling the stock are his sole property rights. He cannot effectively question the amount of the dividend, nor can he dictate the policy of the corporation. He has no control over the portion of the means of production that he owns: he has no effective ownership.

In a collectivist state, in which private accumulations of capital are severely limited or forbidden, a man would not have a hundred thousand dollars to "invest". He would not be permitted to "save" the surplus income of his labor so that he could apply it to further production — he could not "let his money work for him". The collectivist state itself would accumulate the capital for future production: the individual would "own" that capital only in the sense that it would be there for him to apply his labor to. And if the units of production are properly balanced – corn with wheat, wheat with steel, steel with cosmetics, all with one another – he may expect a certain security. But he is not free. For it cannot be said that he in any sense controls the means of production. Control, the power to direct production and to command markets, is freedom under finance-capitalism.

II

The history of property in the United States is a struggle, from 1787 on, of one kind of property against another. Small ownership, typified by agriculture, has been worsted by big, dispersed ownership – the corporation. This must be kept steadily in mind. Without this fact it is easy to fall into the trap of the Big Business interests today, who are trying to convince the people that there is *one* kind of property – just *property*, whether it be a thirty-acre farm in Kentucky or a stock certificate in the United States Steel Corporation. For if there is a contest merely between property and non-property – between real private property, as the average American understands it, and collectivism – the small owner will come to the support of the big corporation. And this is what the big corporation is using every means to make the small owner do.

The owner of the small farm, of the small factory, of the village store, owns a distinct kind of property. It is the familiar, historical kind. The reason why the "little man" confidently identifies his interests with the big interests is that he cannot imagine another kind of property than his own. He thinks that there is just "property", and that he has been less successful in accumulating it than Mr. Mellon. Of course the corporations know better. And they take advantage of the innocent rectitude of the owner of genuine property. There could not be a more grotesque proof of this intention of Big Business than the Liberty League, which uses liberty and property as slogans in a campaign to deprive the American people of what little liberty, what little property, they still have.

A movement to restore property to the citizens of this country must be based upon a broad distinction. The people must be shown the fundamental difference between private property, which means effective control by the owner, and corporate property, which usually means control by a clique of the many owners. The people must learn that corporate property is no less hostile to their interests than state, or collectivist, ownership – that the corporation is socially less responsible and perhaps eventually less efficient than collectivism.

The joint-stock corporation is the enemy of private property in the same sense as communism is. The collectivist state is the logical development of corporate ownership and, if it comes, it will signalize the final triumph of Big Business. "All the arts," said Walter Pater, "strive toward the condition of music." Corporate structure strives toward the condition of Moscow.

It will have reached that condition when the integration of the big monopolies requires still further concentration of control, in the hands of the state, and when ownership is so dispersed that it will be coextensive with society as a whole.

III

What is effective ownership? It is not a metaphysical essence. Unlike liberty it is not a thing of the spirit. Common sense can recognize it. The effective ownership of property entails personal responsibility for the action of a given portion of the means of production. A true property system will be composed of a large proportion of owners whose property is not to be expressed solely in terms of exchange-value, but retains, for the owner, the possibility of use-value. Liberty is the power of the owner to choose between selling and using; not absolute power of choice, but choice relative to "conditions". As the freedom to "use" disappears, liberty begins to disappear. There has never been a society in which use-value has been the exclusive kind of value; no such society is being recommended now. But it must remain the basis of liberty.

A farmer owns a hog. It has two values – use-value and exchange- or market-value. The farmer's ownership is effective because he has the relatively free choice between killing the hog for his smoke-house and selling it on the market.

No such choice is open to the stockholder in the giant corporation. He holds a certificate of rights and expectations. In order to make good the rights and to fulfill the expectations of the "owners" the corporation has got to sell its commodity. Its concern is wholly with exchange-value. The "liberty" available to the corporation consists in the degree of *power* it has from time to time over the market. If it lacks this power it has no liberty whatever. The farmer, if he is protected by system of prices and distribution favorable to agriculture, enjoys a kind of liberty, the real kind, that can function apart from power over others. Now suppose a corporation makes tires. The market for tires in a given year is bad. It cannot eat the tires, nor can it operate enough cars of its own to consume them. Neither can the stockholder consume tires to the amount of "expectations" (dividends) due him. He may look at the pretty pictures on his stock certificate, and starve – or he may sell the stock at a price that he cannot influence in his favor.

It is not suggested that everybody make his own tires in a system that requires by law universal production for use. It is rather that finance-capitalism has become so top-heavy with a crazy jig-saw network of exchange-value that the individual citizen is wholly at the mercy of the shifting pieces of the puzzle at remote points where he cannot possibly assert his own needs and rights. This was not originally the American system. We began with the belief that society should be supported by agriculture, the most stable basis of society because it is relatively less dependent upon the market than any other kind of production.

Now this is elementary, and that is why Big Business does not include it in its propaganda today. Nor is Big Business interested in the responsibility of property, an attribute of ownership no less important than legal title itself. Responsibility is a function of control, and is necessary to effective ownership. A stock certificate is a symbol of a certain amount of capital working somewhere to produce a certain amount of exchange-value from which the "owner" hopes to derive a certain amount of profit. But dispersed ownership guided by concentrated control deprives the stockholder of the onerous privileges of responsibility. For control alone makes responsibility possible. It doesn't make it inevitable. The history of the big corporation shows that the men in control, having a remote, symbolic, paper connection with the owners, violate their responsibility in two ways – by milking the stockholders and by stealing from new capital issues.

And the social aspect of responsibility does not exist. The corporation must produce for the market; labor is necessarily an inhuman item of costs. If the stockholder has no chance to be responsible, neither has the chairman of the board. Both are involved in a system of property rights in which responsibility to labor is on principle irrelevant. The corporation has only the freedom of power, not responsible freedom of choice. It must be un-responsible in the sense that a man may supposedly be un-moral. The corporation may choose to give its labor numerous "social services" in sheer humanitarian ebullience. Labor gets as philanthropy what is due to the free citizen as right.

Changes in the character of property since the rise of the big corporation are ably summarized by Berle and Means* under seven heads:

1. Ownership under real private property was active. It is now passive, under the corporation.

2. Ownership formerly meant an extension of the owner's personality – a connection between personal and

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* *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* by Adolf A. Berle, Jr. and Gardiner C. Means.

physical property that gave to property a moral significance that it now lacks. "With the corporate revolution, this quality has been lost to the property-owner much as it has been lost to the worker through the industrial revolution."

3. The individual's wealth is no longer an expression of his own efforts. The moral significance of this is obvious. Wealth is now conditioned by (a) those in actual control of a business and (b) the general confidence of society in its future prosperity – usually herd-feeling.

4. Individual wealth has become extremely liquid; it is quickly convertible from one form to another. The facility of the "market" is a factor to be considered in the decline of the responsibility of ownership, which has become fluid and anonymous.

5. A man's wealth is capital – ownership of a portion of the means of production. It fluctuates under constant appraisal; that is, its exchange-value is subject to constant revision.

6. Wealth exists decreasingly in a form which can be employed directly by the owner. When wealth was in the form of land, it could be used by the owner even if its market value was negligible. "The physical quality of such wealth makes possible a subjective value to the owner quite apart from any market value it may have. The newer form of wealth is quite incapable of this direct use. Only through sale in the market can the owner obtain its direct use. He is thus tied to the market as never before." (A man can love the land, and I suppose men loved the small, vine-clad factories of early New England. The man who loves the United States Steel Corporation could make a good living in the side-show.)

7. "Finally, in the corporate system, the 'owner' of industrial wealth is left with a mere symbol of ownership while the power, responsibility, and the substance of ownership which have been an integral part of owner-

ship in the past are being transferred to a separate group in whose hands lies control."

To summarize, historically, this summary: since about 1760 in Great Britain and since the Civil War in America, *one attribute of property as it existed for five hundred years has been steadily lost.* That attribute is the responsibility of personal control. The other attribute remains: legal ownership. But without control its future security must necessarily be tenuous. If the legal remnant of ownership should disappear, as it must if finance-capitalism cannot get on its feet again, the last vestige of the institution of private property will be gone. It will be replaced by collectivist ownership. Possibly the change will be ushered in by another depression, followed by great industrial liquidations. The big productive plants will remain, with ownership even more dispersed than before: through society as a whole; and with control even more concentrated under a fiction called the State.

IV

Figures obligingly prove anything. But there are no figures to prove that the concentrated control of property is not enormous.

Of the total business wealth of the country seventy-eight per cent is corporate. There are over five hundred corporations each with assets of over $100,000,000. The two hundred largest control forty-nine per cent of *all* corporate wealth, which includes the thousands of small corporations. Nearly forty per cent, then, of all business wealth, both corporate and private, is controlled by the two hundred corporations.

In 1929 the national wealth was about $367,000,000,000. The total assets of the two hundred big corporations was about $81,000,000,000, or twenty-two per cent of the national wealth. (These corporations are non-banking.) The figures are taken from Berle and Means, who comment:

> [The big corporation's] political influence may be tremendous. Therefore, if roughly half of corporate wealth is controlled by two hundred big corporations and half by smaller companies, it is fair to assume that very much more than half of industry is dominated by these units. This concentration is made even more significant when it is remembered that as a result of it, approximately two thousand individuals out of a population of one hundred and twenty-five million are in a position to control and direct half of industry.

These two thousand men control the wealth of nearly six million investors – a ratio of one to three thousand.

In 1819 Chief Justice Marshall, in the famous Dartmouth College Case, described the corporation as

> an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of law. Being the mere creature of law, it possesses only those properties which the charter of its creation confers upon it, either expressly, or as incidental to its very existence. Among the most important are immortality, and, if the expression may be allowed, individuality; properties by which a perpetual succession of many persons are considered as the same, and may act as a single individual.

If the concentrated control of wealth is to be immortal, its next avatar is not likely to be a bigger and better capitalist corporation. The Marxists believe in the big corporation for two, to them, excellent reasons: (1) they like centralization as a good thing in itself; and (2) they like it as a means. Not only is the big mass-production unit easier to "take over" than distributed units; the two thousand men in control of the two hundred big corporations would be easier to eliminate than six million scattered owners who also control what they own. So the Marxists praise the big corporation as the result of "economic determinism" (divine order) because they know that it has already accomplished the first stage of the journey toward the collectivist state: the impotence of dispersed ownership under increasingly concentrated control. They are pleased because one of the two chief attributes of historic property is virtually destroyed.

For the Marxists know that legal ownership alone is nothing, that the secret of power is control. Let us imagine a country doctor in Alabama or Nebraska. He would not only be willing to fight for his farm or for his partnership in the local button factory; he would also be *able* to fight for it – though at present it might be a difficult war – because he would be able to see it, recognize it, understand its relation to the town as a whole – because he would be able to put himself in front of it and shoot. But he would not know whom to shoot at if (a) the rubber corporation in Ohio, in which he owned stock, had to liquidate, or if (b) the assets of the corporation were seized by Mr. Norman Thomas for the State. He might decide to shoot the mail-carrier who had repeatedly failed to deliver his dividend check. That would be a kind of political action, action on the whole about as effective as he finds possible at present in a society paralyzed by the destruction of effective ownership, by the divorce of ownership from control.

Now this state of affairs existing between the immortal corporation and the mortal owner – to say nothing of the present non-owner who is as good as dead – has been brought about by "economic determinism". Nature decided in favor of Big Business from the beginning. Nature did nothing of the sort, and there is no determinism about it. There is only the determination of those in power to perpetuate and to continue to control the corporate system. What exists in contemplation of law can cease to exist in contemplation of law. Corporate property has reached gigantic dimensions under protection of certain legal fictions: when the law made the abstract corporation a person, gifted with the privileges of real persons but few of the responsibilities, it established a fiction that has gradually undermined the traditional safeguards, the truly functional property rights, embodied in the older common law.

Shall we make a law to undo bad laws and to set up a better older law? It is comfortingly too simple. Yet the property state may in the long run be the only escape from violence. Or it may not be. If the people were convinced that the collectivists wished to eliminate the two thousand men only to dispossess them more thoroughly, they might decide to eliminate the two thousand themselves – to get control of their property again.

V

The struggle is not new. It is the meaning of American history. Hamilton and Jefferson are the symbols of the struggle. Its story is too well known to need retelling. The next phase of the contest is doubtless near, but how the lines will be drawn it is impossible to predict. There are two general possibilities. We shall drift with the corporate structure of emasculated ownership until all trace of widespread control vanishes: that would be the tyrant state where corporations would be bigger than now and the two thousand men reduced, say, to twenty. Or we shall return to real politics, resume our political character, and reassert the rights of effective ownership.

I am not suggesting that the American Telephone and Telegraph Company break up into jealous units, one for each county. But I do suggest, if the institution of property, corporate or private, is to survive at all, that we keep only enough centralization – of production as well as control – to prevent gross economic losses and the sudden demoralization of large classes of workers. Our objective has been the big corporation. We must change it. Our objective should be the private business. Corporations are not yet big enough to satisfy the corporations. Nor doubtless will property ever be widely enough distributed to please the absolute distributist. Distributed property should nevertheless be the aim.

Or put it this way: we have been mere economists, and now we have got to be political economists as well. Economics is the study of wealth, and it points ways to greater production of wealth. But political economy is the study of human welfare.

We have tried to produce as much wealth as possible. It cannot be denied that technology and corporate ownership have combined to increase staggeringly the aggregate wealth of modern states. But it is an equivocal wealth. The aggregate wealth of a nation may be stupendous, and the people remain impoverished. Let us assume what need not be true, that the total wealth of the property state would not be so great as the total wealth of the tyrant state. Yet the well-being of the people would be greater all round. So, if we are to achieve so desirable an end, we have got to add politics to economics in order to get a sum that we may, perhaps, call free citizens. For politics is – or should be – concerned with the welfare of persons, which is not always the same as their capacity to produce the maximum of goods.

VI

The sceptics about the property state, and even some of its friends who misunderstand it, assume that we are advocating something like this: Every man must live on a farm, hew his own logs for his cabin, make his own clothing – after tending the sheep and growing the cotton – raise all his food, and refuse to have electric lights. I should like to use this derisive idyll as a boomerang. Even though production for use throughout society is now neither possible nor desirable, it should not be forgotten that the nearer a society is to production for use, the freer it is. We are not, therefore, crying for absolute liberty; we do want a little of it – as much as can be got when the majority of men own small units of production, whether factories or farms.

We do not ask everybody to live on a farm, nor – since we are allowing ourselves a little exchange-value in the property state – do we ask everybody to rush out as soon as he has read this essay and buy a small store, a small factory, a small automobile, or a small football team.

At present the buyer of a farm would probably, in a year, be glad to run from his debts, and give it to the insurance company; or should he not be glad to run, he had better try to be. A farm now is not necessarily property. We want to make it property again. A small grocery store may represent certain paper property rights, but in view of the six chain stores surrounding it, it does not represent the same property rights as it did a hundred years ago. We want the store to be property again. Altogether it does seem to be a modest wish. For it is not only necessary to buy the farm or the factory, it is necessary to keep it. It can be kept if we can restore property rights that unite again ownership and control.

Ownership *and* control are property. Ownership without control is slavery because control without ownership is tyranny. Under finance-capitalism liberty has been defined*:

> Liberty itself is empty and meaningless. Its meaning is in its content. Its content is freedom to choose. . . . The economic equivalent of liberty, therefore, is freedom to choose between two degrees of power over other persons.

This Hobson's choice, in a system in which the owner-without-control has not even the freedom of power, becomes a real choice in a system of real property. And the real choice is a moral choice; it gives the human being the opportunity to survive economically without exercising power over others. Pure exchange-value represents the power of its owner over other persons or his lack of that power. Pure use-value represents the owner's liberty not to exercise power over other persons, and his independence of their power over him. The property state stands for a reasonable adjustment of these extremes.

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* *The Legal Foundations of Capitalism* by John R. Commons.

The liberty of power is the only kind possible in the corporate system. But liberty in the true sense is grossly caricatured when it is replaced by the mere possibility of power over our fellow men. Even that kind of liberty is denied to the great masses who have no power at all.

REVIEWS

A New Novelist*

"IN RESPECT to this novel, as I called it, I explained how insecure I had felt all these years, like an old schoolmaster for the first time in the saddle, at one moment innocently elated, and at the next in total distress. This wasn't my métier. However, I had got back alive to the stable, and safely dismounted. I stood again with both feet on my own ground; and I could laugh with him at my foolish excursion, if he pronounced it ridiculous."

After such a charming disclaimer, any reviewer with only an ounce of courtesy will be tempted to pass lightly over what he has not found to his liking in Mr. Santayana's novel, and restrict himself to recommending *The Last Puritan* for what it undoubtedly is – a novel that deserves attention and will repay any reader. This may seem damning with faint praise: it is not so intended, but is to be taken at face value. It is coldly stated merely because the unanimous praise of the daily press and the superlatives piled on by Mr. Santayana's own publishers have very nearly exhausted the available stock of laudatory adjectives. To use them all over again would be sheer waste effort. Yet the very fact that so far (at least to one reviewer's knowledge) no critic has fulfilled the function of the still, small voice leads one to attempt a more austere appraisal of how well Mr. Santayana has accomplished his foolish excursion.

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* THE LAST PURITAN, A MEMOIR IN THE FORM OF A NOVEL *by George Santayana* (SCRIBNER'S. 601 pp. $2.75).

The Last Puritan is the biography of Oliver Alden – presumably a composite personage, made up perhaps from ten or a dozen young men the author had known during his teaching days at Harvard. The story opens in the seventies – about the time that Santayana himself was brought to the United States by his parents. We are at once introduced to the Alden house on Beacon Street. It is one of a pair of plain brick structures. "They were evidently twins and had been identical at birth, but life had developed them in different directions. The one sister was doing her old-maidenly best to follow the fashions . . . whereas the aged Cinderella next door had become more ashen every day." In this so singularized and somewhat inhuman dwelling lived old Nathaniel Alden and his much younger half-brother, Peter, the latter destined to be Oliver's father.

The Aldens are, of course, wealthy beyond any rational human need, and Nathaniel, as one could almost guess, is one of those methodical, pitiful creatures, not uncommon in American life, whose greatest concern is to conceal from the world the extent of his fortune by scrupulously avoiding that most humane function of great wealth, liberality. Even here Mr. Santayana's definition of puritanism begins to take shape. Nathaniel Alden has too great a love of truth not to know that his means impose upon him some duty of liberality. So he buys pictures, not for the sake of getting good ones, but to help art. "It was a public duty, he declared, for those who could afford it to encourage art in a new country. They shouldn't ask whether a struggling painter *deserved* encouragement, but whether he *needed* it." Peter Alden, however, did not come of so pure and unadulterated a New England stock. His mother "had come from Baltimore, almost a Southerner: and could anything good come out of the South?" Nathaniel discovers that Peter has actually been associating with Irish Catholics, and he seizes the opportunity to dislodge the foreign element from his house. Peter becomes another symbol – the expatriate American: too much New England for his mother's Baltimore, too human for Boston. The circumstances of his gradual expatriation and gradual, half-hearted return are implicit in his character and fortune.

At last, a mildly neurotic, weak, middle-aged millionaire, he marries the daughter of an impoverished but distinguished Connecticut alienist, a "strong-minded" New England lady, to whom the whole arrangement is very satisfactory from both the social and the financial points of view. To such as these is Oliver born. We follow him through childhood, adolescence, and early manhood. His father represents the exotic, the cosmopolitan – that widely-travelled, purposeless, fatigued American man of the world, living most of the time on his yacht; at home in Great Falls, Connecticut, only for holidays. The mother represents New England small-town cultivation and scientific rationalism at its bleakest. Her child must be prepared for his mission, which is to improve an increasingly alien world through the power conferred by his wealth and his blood. The instruments chosen for this high duty are a philosophy-loving German governess (infused with romance, Goethe, and the "free, bold, pure German genius"), the Great Falls High School (to avoid the "snobbery, rowdiness, cruelty, and immorality" of all boarding schools) and Williams College (where Mrs. Alden's brother held a respectable professorship).

One can imagine the result of this environment. Add to it a cruise on Peter Alden's yacht and the consequent hero-worship for a very attractive yet fleshly young Englishman who is the captain, and one can see that the stage is set for a tragedy of futility. Mrs. Alden alone might have made of Oliver a College President or teacher or doctor. His puritan insistence upon the truth, "hatred of all shams, scorn of all mummeries, a bitter merciless pleasure in the hard facts", would not have prevented that. It was what he learned as a result of contact with his father which made it possible for him to convince himself "on puritan grounds that it was wrong to be a puritan. . . . That was the tragedy of it. Thought it his clear duty to give puritanism up, but couldn't."

The remainder of the book merely works out the tragedy to its logical conclusion: Oliver's death in an accident several days after the Armistice. We meet a gallery of his contemporaries: his carefree young cousin, Mario Van de Weyer; another cousin, Caleb Wetherbee; Rose Darnley, sister of the English yacht captain, who is to be Oliver's wife, and then refuses him. It is all written as only Mr. Santayana could write it, in a casual, free prose, always clear and sparkling. It would be tedious to rehearse the names and describe the characters. *The Last Puritan* is a long book, yet there is not a dull page in it.

Yet, as one reads on, one cannot help feeling that there is a canker in the rose. Nathaniel Alden, Peter Alden, Oliver Alden's mother, Cousin Caleb Wetherbee – all the characters, except for Oliver himself, seem just a trifle too consistent, too symbolic; they almost put one in mind of Dickens, almost they are cousins to the "humor" characters of an earlier century. And one cannot help feeling that beneath this business of overdrawing everyone there is a little malice, almost a little personal malice, which makes the whole picture curdle and draw away from life. Here is Mr. Santayana looking at New England, not New England itself. For every episode, for every slightest detail he may be able to cite chapter and verse (although with regard to Williams College I can vouch for an absence of authority!); indeed one almost recognizes some of the people. But then, when one thinks of the actual person one has known who is called to mind, one remembers as well the inconsistent, redeeming traits. Mr. Santayana seems to have suppressed these almost systematically. Everyone in *The Last Puritan* is very much inferior to Mr. Santayana; he is looking down upon them from a great height, but not with that benevolent abstraction which eminence and distance imply. Nowhere does he express it, yet one constantly feels that he never really knew, let alone loved, these people. As he himself says of Oliver: "I don't prefer austerity for myself as against abundance, against intelligence, against the irony of ultimate truth. But I see that in itself, as a statuesque object, austerity is more beautiful, and I like it in others." One wonders whether the last phrase is not just a little inspired by a conviction of the "irony of ultimate truth".

The most extreme case of this sourness, which is not the all-embracing bitterness of a Dean Swift or the amusing malice of a Whistler, but rather an unhealthy thing, and hence a taint-worm to the greatness of Mr. Santayana's novel, is Cousin Caleb Wetherbee. He is a convert to Catholicism, a monstrous hunchback, and cripple. If he had been merely an incidental figure, this would have been of little consequence. But he is made into a symbol of Catholicism, not only in Oliver's mind, but almost explicitly by the omission from the novel of any other actively Catholic character. He is depicted as being so physically repulsive that one is repelled. One calls to mind Spenser's description of the old hags. "Under excitement, when he was enforcing his favorite opinions, his whole contorted frame would tremble distressingly; and before he could compose himself a few bubbles of foam would rise to his lips and threaten to ooze out; and from time to time, as he became aware of them, he would wipe them away with a handkerchief held painfully in his very long and unsteady fingers." Not a pretty picture. And even its worst enemy would grant that to make such a creature the mouthpiece for all Catholic philosophy and thought betrays something in the author.

Good as *The Last Puritan* is, one finishes the epilogue with sadness. Those to whom Santayana has served in some measure as a star, a critic ever reasonable, a philosopher never turgid, certainly never morbid, the words of Boileau on a similar occasion must come to mind:

> *Dans ce sac ridicule où Scapin s'enveloppe,*
> *Je ne reconnois plus l'auteur du Misanthrope.*

HARRY LORIN BINSSE

Physics and Free Will*

IN THIS small volume we have an example of a scientist making what the philosophers call a critical regress. Dr. Compton, the distinguished physicist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1927, desires to formulate for himself a philosophy which he can use in guiding his own life. He would also report his findings to the public in a form that can be understood and would make an effort to show their import to human life and thought. With a diffidence that is very unusual in scientists who venture into the field of philosophy he thus defines his attitude:

> If the scientist's amateur interpretations are found faulty, these faults and inadequacies can be remedied by those who have a more extensive philosophical background. If, however, the scientist for fear of making such efforts were to keep to himself his newly acquired knowledge, it would remain unavailable for the guidance of men's actions.

In his first chapter he discusses the perennial conflict between freedom and law. His starting-point is the traditional division of both religion and philosophy as to whether man is really responsible for his actions. Judaism and Christianity have always insisted on man's responsibility to God, but even here, as in the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, there is a tendency to throw all responsibility on a higher power. In traditional Mohammedanism the authority of God is made complete and the result of man's striving is always the will of Allah. This he finds to be in line with the rôle of fate in Greek tragedy, where a man commits a crime because the fates had so decreed. Yet even in those cases the doctrine of determinism, he says, is never quite thoroughgoing, "for men are continually reminded of the penalties for evil actions and the rewards for good, implying at least a modicum of freedom".

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* THE FREEDOM OF MAN *by Arthur H. Compton.* (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS. 153 pp. $2.00).

In philosophy he sees the materialist and the theist as hard pressed to find a rational basis for freedom. The former regards all human actions as following the same definite physical laws as other matter and as observing cause and effect to their inevitable conclusion. The theist considers the universe, with man in it, as an aspect of God's activity, "for which God himself must be responsible". Summing up, he tells us: "From Socrates and Epicurus to Kant and Berkeley the philosophical writings echo with the struggle to wrest a rational freedom from a set of postulates which seem to deny its possibility."

Against all this uncertainty the scientists have definitely affirmed the complete physical determination of man's actions, although most scientific men have assumed, he says, that they could act as if they were free. Then, at the very moment when everything was quite settled on the basis of impersonal and unchangeable law, the blow fell. In 1927 the principle of uncertainty was formulated. Three years later Heisenberg, co-author of the principle, wrote in his *Physical Principles of the Quantum Theory* the definite statement that natural phenomena do not obey exact laws. How great the shock of this assertion was for the scientists is already known to readers of Eddington's

New Pathways in Science, where the problem of indeterminacy is discussed in the fouth and fifth chapters. Here is how Professor Compton reacts to the Heisenberg principle:

> Natural phenomena do not obey exact laws. This statement marks perhaps the most significant revolution in the history of scientific thought. For faith in the reliability of nature is the bedrock upon which the structure of science is built. Has science, with its continual searching of fundamentals, finally undermined its own foundations? *Or is it possible that under the new physics a more adequate picture of the world can be drawn, one in which purpose is effective and life again has human meaning?*

More than anything else in the book the question which I have italicized indicates the problem to which our author addresses himself in this series of lectures. In his effort to solve it he makes a brief historical survey, going back to the Greeks and reminding us that an important school of science was once dealt a death blow because its teachings seemed to remove the basis of morality.

Twenty-five centuries ago the early Greek scientists dedicated themselves to the pursuit of knowledge, not with the hope of controlling nature, but with the desire to learn the purpose of life and how it should be lived. As an example, Pythagoras laid the foundations of a science of sound, advanced the subject of geometry, conceived a theory of evolution, and indicated more clearly than any man before him that the universe follows a system of uniform laws. From this he concluded that it is wise to learn those laws and to adjust our lives in harmony with them. This

Pythagorean axiom governed all Greek thought and later enabled Socrates to reject the science of the Atomists because it led to a world in which there was no significance to morality and in which human effort was of no avail. The same fight was made by Plato and Aristotle against any form of science which failed to illumine man's path of life.

But science was to have a rebirth. "For about three centuries, from 750 to 1050 A.D., Islam was doing the world's most important work in science." Dr. Compton puts forward the thesis, which he makes no effort to develop, that in Islam as in Greece the fundamental causes of the decadence of science were not political or economic but philosophical and religious.

There was to be a second rebirth of science. Much of Aristotle's work in science had been preserved by the Mohammedans and was to find its way through Arabic channels into the West. And then we have this tribute to the scholastics of the thirteenth century:

> St. Thomas Aquinas set himself the heroic task of fitting this new knowledge into the religious teaching of the day. *Scientia et religio ex uno fonte* was the motto, and with it came renewed interest in the world of nature, for thus one might learn regarding the works of his Creator.

Although the author makes no explicit reference to it, it is to be noticed that Aquinas took the viewpoint of the Greek philosophers, namely, that science is of value only if it tells men the purpose of life and how it should be lived. But the beginning of the Renaissance marks a definite shift in men's outlook. Roger Bacon and Leonardo worked with "the hope that man might thus be gifted with new powers". So we had

Newton and the reign of law. For more than three hundred years after Newton's day the defenders of human freedom were to be proscribed. And now the issue is being joined again.

In the beginning of his second chapter the author tells us that stubborn common sense has ever refused to relinquish its hold on freedom. In religions and philosophies the echoes of the strife have often been heard. Meanwhile the scientist has been deaf to every philosophic protest against his complete acceptance of the absolute determinism of the physical world.

> It seems unfortunate that some modern philosopher has not forcibly called attention to the fact that one's ability to move his hand at will is much more directly and certainly known than are even the well-tested laws of Newton, and that even if these laws deny one's ability to move his hand at will the preferable conclusion is that Newton's laws require modification.

Here Dr. Compton goes on to tell us that the physicist has assumed the universal applicability of the laws which he finds in the inorganic world but has seldom bothered himself with the fact that if a completely deterministic set of laws such as those of Newton apply to man's actions he is himself an automaton. But this is only half the argument that might be advanced. The real fault of the physicist is that he assumes the applicability of the laws affecting inorganic elements to human nature. The modern psychologist errs in the same way, applying to the mental processes of human beings the laws that govern the reactions of animals such as laboratory rats. Indeed, Dr. Compton himself falls into the fallacy. It matters nothing to the philosophical study of free will whether or not the Heisenberg principle of indeterminacy is true or false as applied to physical research. It seems to be fatally easy even for a scientist of Dr. Compton's caliber to forget that the human mind is not of the nature of a proton but is spiritually alive, and endowed with the power of self-direction and self-control.

Not that he actually forgets that there is such a thing as human freedom. But he is impatient to find it capable of transcending law. That a man actually does as he pleases within certain limits, he says, is a matter of everyday experience. "A man's pleasure, in other words consciousness, is thus an additional determining factor which supplements the physical laws in defining his actions." It is his hope that some day a new form of determinism could be developed in which the psychological laws which may fix a man's choice would supplement the physical laws that leave him a certain latitude of action. But here he takes a lesson from the quantum theory. "Psychological laws, like physical laws, may very probably be found to be statistical, and the definite result would still remain with the individual."

His conclusion from all this is that, when the law of causality is replaced by the principle of uncertainty, Socrates' indictment of science as hostile to morality does not apply, for man is still left in control of his own actions within the bounds set by natural law. Further, he sees Pythagoras' powerful argument from a world governed by law emphasized by every advance of science. "Instead of removing the foundation of morality, science now presents new reasons why men should discipline their lives, and supplies new means whereby they can make their world more perfect." The optimism of this view almost takes one's breath away. Certainly the author fails to advance any arguments to justify it.

The three remaining chapters are concerned with intelligence in nature, man's place in God's world, and the hope of immortality. These are mainly subjects with which the philosopher is more familiar than the scientist, and accordingly the last three chapters of the book lack the virility and strength of the first two. The author's viewpoint is that we find ourselves in an inspiring setting in view of the unfolding of the great program of nature and we feel that we are a vital part of a great enterprise in which a mighty Intelligence is working out His hidden plan. "In our hands we hold the control of the conditions of life on this planet." This is assuredly not the severely scientific attitude of the earlier chapters.

When the reader has finished his study of the book he will be likely to wonder where is Dr. Compton's more adequate picture of the world, one "in which purpose is effective and life again has human meaning". Certainly the book fails to contribute anything to the philosophy of free will, for Dr. Compton unconsciously observes the scientific habit of attempting to apply to human nature the principles that seem to be operative in the domain of physics. That habit is logically vicious. The proton may act on a principle of determinacy or on a principle of uncertainty. But its mode of action is no criterion of the mental operations which philosophy designates as acts of a man's free will.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

Marxist-Paranoiac Phenomena *

"WHAT is it?" is the question with which the average person greets the more extreme examples of modern plastic art, and the question becomes particularly emphatic in the case of surrealist art. David Gascoyne has answered the question simply and, considering the amount of surrealist art produced to date, at some length. He is sympathetic to the movement, if not an adherent of it, and believes that surrealism (he has thus Anglicized *surréalisme*) may, and should, extend itself beyond its Paris clique. Surrealism, indeed, is broad in many ways; its followers are as ready to practise one art as another, and are by turns painters, sculptors, poets, trance-mediums, and movie-makers; though not Party-members, they look toward Moscow as other believers toward Mecca. It is hard to say how well surrealism would stand a trans-Atlantic passage, but a few years ago it was already known in America through the agency of the expatriate magazines, and, more recently, attained some popular renown from an exhibition in New York of the paintings of Salvador Dali, who has brought new vigor to the movement by giving pictorial expression to paranoia.

Mr. Gascoyne claims a well-known ancestor for surrealism, and seems entirely justified in doing so: the Marquis de Sade. In our day the Marquis is perhaps chiefly known for having given his name to a sexual perversion which editors of liberal weeklies use to describe political movements they are opposed to; this perversion does not explain the surrealists' especial attachment to Sade, though it is not altogether insignificant. They look up to Sade, says Mr. Gascoyne, quoting Paul Eluard, "for having desired to restore to civilized man the force of his primitive instincts". They admire him for having been a great humanitarian. This would indicate no cleavage in the Marquis' character, since humanitarianism and sadism go nicely together, as the Russian Revolution, or the behavior of a social worker on encountering a poor family which believes in its right to privacy, attests. From Sade, Mr. Gascoyne goes on to trace a lineage which, whether or not one looks on it with favor, appears to have maintained a certain purity of blood; some of its members are Gérard de Nerval, Baudelaire (here, of course, is ground for dispute, but Mr. Gascoyne will have no "*whitewashing* this noble rebel"), Rimbaud (our author breaks into disgusted exclamation marks at the spectacle of this bourgeois-hating adolescent being honored by the citizens of his birthplace with a monument and a brass band), Huysmans, and the South American Jew, Isidore Ducasse, who fancied himself the Prince of Darkness but publicly assumed the lesser temporal title of the Comte de Lautréamont.

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* A SHORT SURVEY OF SURREALISM *by David Gascoyne* (COBDEN-SANDERSON, London. 162 pp. 7/6).

Just what surrealism is becomes more clear. It is the latest expression of what Wyndham Lewis has called "inverted dope-diabolics", or, as Paul Claudel put it, "Neither dadaism nor surrealism have anything but a single meaning: paederastic." However, dadaism and surrealism, according to the proponents of the latter, are not quite the same thing. The former was an earlier movement which arose in War-time Zurich, originated by the poet Tristan Tzara and the sculptor-painter Hans Arp at a time when the latter, so he says, had a roll of bread up his left nostril and his twelve children about him – a statement rather less than worthy of an imitation of S. J. Perleman in a high-school magazine. Dada was characterized by "negativism, revolt, destruction of all values" and "spat in the eye of the world". Dada flourished, found expression in a number of small magazines, and in 1920 had a parallel movement in Hanover called Merz, and by 1922 was dead. It was than that André Breton arrived on the scene, in Paris, and was delivered of surrealism.

Dada had been negative, it denied everything; but surrealism was constructive and affirmed the identity of the worlds of dream and of action: reality and unreality were one, it said. That, of course, is a time-honored romantic proposition, though the older romantics were inclined merely to say that the dream was *better* than reality, then to proceed to live in it. But the surrealists, finding that they were able to write as well automatically as they did consciously and being acquainted with "Freud and a few other scientific explorers of the unconscious", were for doing away entirely with that intellect which operated only so long as an opposition between dream and reality was assumed as, at least, one of its working conditions. The dream-world of the older romantics was, with some notable exceptions, painted in rather roseate colors; but the surrealists, prompted by Freud and the disorder of the post-War world about them, knew that the dream-world actually contained much that was horrid. The horrid they welcomed: it not only shocked the bourgeoisie, but since it was a horridness of their own creation it was good, for what is of one's own making must be good in the light of romantic egoism.

There are more complex strains than this in surrealism, and in one aspect it might be regarded as a movement toward intelligibility in painting. Most compositions of the surrealists are "abstract", and abstraction in art dates from before the War; but while the earlier abstractionists sought to lift the objects they painted into a purer realm, doing away with the accidents of resemblance until they had fairly pictured an Ideal (a hopeless but not completely reprehensible attempt), the surrealists strive to represent the actual objects of undirected fantasy. So, to some extent, they are painting a realer world than Wassily Kandinsky or the cubists, but it is real only in the sense that anything intensely personal is real: in a madman one appreciates that a disturbance is going on somewhere but can deduce little of its nature from the outer agitation that manifests it: one may be moved by an insane outburst without understanding, but one is moved on a low level. We should not, says Mr. Gascoyne, take him "to imply that surrealism is anything but a 'latent state of mind' "; and so indeed it is, since we all have minds that can become deranged. The simple truth of the matter is that the surrealist so hates the world that has been built by sanity that he prefers to build one with a deranged mind.

Idiocy and insanity are forms of privacy, as the etymology of the first word indicates. If surrealism retires into the extreme privacy of insanity, how can it be reconciled with communism? Mr. Gascoyne explains the possibility by those words more blessed than Mesopotamia, dialectical materialism.

> It should [he says] by now be clear to Marxists that the surrealist attitude is totally in accord with the Communist philosophy of dialectical materialism, with its insistence on the synonymity of theory and practice, and that only the imminence of proletarian revolution allows surrealism the hope that its aim will be ultimately fulfilled. The surrealist cause is the revolutionary cause – in spite of the surrealists' bourgeois origin, in spite of the attitude of certain dogmatic Marxists towards such phenomena as Freudian psychoanalysis and the more complicated developments of modern art and literature, and in spite of such apparent compromises on the part of the Communists as the Franco-Soviet pact and the recent rehabilitation in Russia of the bourgeois conception of the family.

Those who fail to see in that, or anywhere, a Hegelian higher synthesis of opposites, can still see a logical link between surrealism and communism. Persons intent upon expressing themselves in forms whose originators have been hitherto confined in asylums where they will neither hurt themselves nor society, naturally resent the society that demands this. Having undeveloped critical faculties, as their artistic expression indicates, they identify economic injustice in the modern world with the type of injustice they imagine they suffer, and, as a result, turn to a system which promises a radical revision of the economic, moral, and intellectual world of today: communism. There are, fortunately, other systems which promise an equally radical revision of society, but they are antipathetic to romantic postulates, and insist on such discipline and recognition of such truths of the spirit as no surrealist could accept. Nor have they in them that hatred of the established and traditional which marks communism and which, with the desire to exhibit the self, is a driving force behind surrealist creation.

From teetering between extreme individualism and collectivism, the surrealists may seem to the average liberal artist of today to have capitulated entirely to collectivism in "their aim to extend indefinitely the limits of 'literature' and 'art' by continually tending to do away with the barrier that separates the contents of the printed page or of the picture-frame from the world of real life and action". Therein they do away with the artist as someone distinct from the mass of people, and might for a moment, to others, appear to agree with Eric Gill in his claim that art, to be an integral part of life, must not be divorced from the crafts of everyday existence. But the agreement would be as heartily denied by the one as by the other, for, says Mr. Gascoyne, surrealism is

> . . . a restatement of the ancient and supposedly discredited notion of inspiration – with a difference. This lyrical element of human thought, the source of all authentic poetry, common to all men did they but realize it, is manifested in the plays of Shakespeare and in the ravings of lunatics, in *Kubla Khan* and in Walt Disney's *Silly Symphonies*. . . . "This lyrical element is . . . the fact and the sole fact of specialists." And when it is said that the aim of surrealism is to break down the barrier separating dream ("poetry") from reality, the irrational from the rational, that is also to say that it is its aim to make this "sole fact of specialists" familiar to everyone.

In all his varied reading, did Irving Babbitt ever come upon a more bald, a more naïve plea for the subrational? Mr. Gascoyne is suggesting, along with the surrealists, that the initial intensity of experience need only be freed of any restraint by mind or will, given expression in words or paint, and that experience, no matter how trivial, will be art. And such a grotesque parody of art does, in fact, seem the only form capable of surviving under communism. If all the really creative activities of life — such as work, love, and play — are determined by the false assumptions of materialism and the necessarily evil rules of bureaucrats who hold these assumptions, then such of the spirit as art nourishes will have to support a feeble and flickering life on the dark muddy currents of the spirit's animal substratum. Men will, in their long leisure hours, snip illustrations from quaint capitalist magazines to mount them in *collages*, like Max Ernst; they will, away from the machine, erect scraps of metal into machines whose purpose is to look like machines, as does Alberto Giacometti; they will frame for their homes or cells their scribbled desk-blotters, in the manner of Joan Miró; they will make paintings, if they are still rather intellectual, in the style of lunatics by using the "paranoiac-critical method", invented by Salvador Dali, but probably by this time they will be able to paint as paranoiacs not by imitation but in their own right.

Writing on "Abstract Art" in a recent number of *The New Oxford Outlook*, a learned Oxford lady says:

> I am bringing to Oxford next term an exhibition of modern abstract art, with its inevitable accompaniment of sur-

realist tendencies. . . . From out of its grave under our great humanistic edifice the abstract art that we thought, and hoped, was dead seems to have risen again. It is perhaps an ominous resurrection. In the West abstract art is Germanic, and to us Germanic culture seems a darkness from which we have tried to escape to the light of humanism. . . .

In the East too the period of the purest Chinese abstract art was the Chou, a period of superstition and bloodshed. Perhaps this form of art is the natural human reaction to an unintelligible and unfriendly world, an attempt to produce an object ordered and entirely real as a refuge from mental chaos. The import of its appearance today is still obscure, yet it cannot but be significant.

What seems most significant is that those determined to render the world yet more unintelligible and more unfriendly are the creators of this art.

GEOFFREY STONE

Mr. Hicks's Tradition*

TWO years have passed without making Granville Hicks any less certain of the validity of his interpretation of American literature since the Civil War. Indeed the trend of literary fashion has been in favor of his thesis; Mr. Hicks can now say, with fairness, of the revolutionary movement in literature: "Today we have, not a tendency, but a movement." It is this very fact that encourages him to carry his theory to absurd lengths, as he does in the new preface to this revised edition of a book which is illuminating and brilliant in its revaluation of American literature. If one felt ready to quarrel with some of the judgements to which Marxist dogma led Mr. Hicks in the writing of this book two years ago, one is spurred to violent objection by some of the statements in the new sections of the work.

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* THE GREAT TRADITION *by Granville Hicks* (MACMILLAN. 341 pp. $2.00).

Mr. Hicks prefaces the book by stating that he does not feel inclined to modify in any fundamental way the evaluation of the various writers discussed, or to alter the general critical method, after the passage of thirty months. He finds that this period has not brought, with the exception of the revolutionary writers (to whom a whole new chapter is devoted), any significant new talents to light. There are many who will find Mr. Hicks's judgement of significance questionable when they read his considered opinion that Eugene O'Neill, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Joseph Wood Krutch, Willa Cather, and Thornton Wilder have demonstrably reached an impasse, and that no non-revolutionary writer has achieved anything in the past two years. Mr. Hicks is kind enough to single out Thomas Wolfe as an exception to this blanket denunciation of non-revolutionary contemporary writing, but he airily dismisses the novelist as "a kind of camp-follower of the revolution". After such outrageous generalizations, one believes Mr. Hicks when he says that criticism is always a weapon and that he sees no reason to conceal the nature of the conflict in which he is involved or the side that he has chosen. This frank revelation of his concept of criticism rather disarms anyone who cherishes the naïve belief that literary criticism should be impartial and catholic, rather than partisan and political, and who, on grounds of theory, finds much on which to differ with Mr. Hicks.

In all fairness, it must be said that Mr. Hicks's ideology provides him with an effective critical instrument in dealing with certain figures in the Great Tradition. The treatments of William Dean Howells, of Henry James, of Edward Bellamy, and of Frank Norris in this book are singularly acute for this reason. But it is also the politics of Mr. Hicks which leads him into inadequacy and misrepresentation, to say nothing of overemphasis, when dealing with the work of Henry Adams, Lafcadio Hearn, and Stephen Crane in the earlier part of the book and with that of Eliot, Tate, Babbitt, More, Cather, Brooks, Frost, and O'Neill in the later portion. The last two chapters of the book, which are largely concerned with developments since 1925, are hopelessly biassed in favor of proletarian writers. They provide, nevertheless, a remarkably brilliant picture, or rather one aspect of the picture, of the last ten years of American literature. Mr. Hicks contrives to be penetrating and illuminating even at the height of his partisanship. But his politics do lead to serious blind spots in his critical apparatus, and even occasionally into absurd self-contradictions.

In denouncing the mad tide of capitalistic enterprise which swept the nation after the Civil War, Mr. Hicks remarks: "When things are in the saddle, the artist, if he deserves the name, is almost certain to be trampled underfoot." These are strange words for an exponent of dialectical materialism, who calls for a literature which will be the expression of the proletariat, who prophesies that "proletarian literature will slowly and by almost imperceptible stages ripen into something finer and nobler than itself, something finer and nobler than any literature the world has ever known, broad as all mankind and free to devote itself to men as men and not men as enemies". Mr. Hicks postulates that any writer, if he is astute and persistent, will come to "certain elementary bread-and-butter questions" which "many writers try to evade, maintaining that economic issues are of no importance, that human nature is always the same, regardless of the systems under which men live, that the basic themes of life and death have nothing to do with the ways in which life is supported. But evasion is not easy and it is very dangerous." Is not the writer, as an artist, likely to be trampled underfoot, when such views guide the reins? Are not things in the saddle, when Marxian materialism is the state philosophy?

The basis of Mr. Hicks's dismissal of the writers of the Gilded Age, of the Fugitives, of the Muckrakers, and of the Lost Generation, is that they were out of touch with reality, that they did not know intimately the ways of calloused hands and bodies worn by labor, poverty, and physical suffering. But in behalf of the proletarian writers Mr. Hicks has this to say: "The novelist who wishes to write about the complex structure of modern society cannot possibly have had all the different kinds of experience he finds it necessary to describe: he can scarcely have been both employer and employee, both union member and scab, both ward boss and reformer. . . . If a novelist is to write about the great social movements of his day, he must get some of his material at second-hand." This last, of course, is what the Muckrakers tried to do; the others depended upon the individual's realization of the universality of human experience: "the ways of all men in the earth, always". But such efforts were not enough, according to Mr. Hicks.

It is such instances of self-contradiction as these, although there are many others that could be singled out, which invalidate much of what in many ways is one of the most sensitive and vital interpretations of American literature that we have had so far. Once one has caught Mr. Hicks straining the facts to fit the dogma with which he has saddled himself, the rest of the work is read warily and judgements are accepted only with many grains of salt. Beyond question, there is a revolutionary tradition in American literature, but many of the manifestations of it upon which Mr. Hicks seizes hardly submit to the Marxist sense of the word. The democratic terminology sometimes is identical with the Marxist, but the words stand for different things and the spirit behind them is totally unlike. One who believes that democracy is not yet spiritually bankrupt will find much to quarrel with in this study of American literature since the Civil War, while recognizing the value of a fresh point of view applied with shrewdness, subtlety, and sensitivity to a subject of importance.

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